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THE
CHURCH'S MESSAGE
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THE HEBREW
PROPHETS &
THE CHURCH
BY THE REV. N.E.
EGERTON SWANN

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The Church's Message for the Coming Time

(A series of hand-books for the people)

EDITOR: THE REV. H. T. KNIGHT, M.A.

Each writer is responsible only for his own book, but the series is undertaken in the joint conviction—

- (1.) That Christianity holds the key of the coming time;
- (2.) That Christianity means Churchmanship, viz., membership in a Divine Society, which reveals the spiritual basis alike of the family, the nation, and the race;
- (3.) That the Catholic Church, the fellowship of the baptized, is really the organ of the world's redemption, since the living God, Who spake by the Hebrew Prophets, has given in Christ Jesus His final message to humanity, and has assigned to His Church the task of its progressive interpretation;
- (4.) That the moral and intellectual bewilderment of our generation, resulting from the influx of new knowledge and the uprising of new enthusiasms during the last half-century, has now been brought to a climax, which provides the Church with a unique opportunity for explaining her mission to the world;
- (5.) That, while the call of the Church must always be to repentance, the primary summons of to-day is rather to frank and careful re-statement, since Christian people cannot realize the extent of their failure, unless they have an adequate vision of what the Church is intended to be;
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- (7.) That faith in the living Christ constitutes the true centre of human knowledge, and the only ground of confidence for the future.

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THE HEBREW PROPHETS AND THE CHURCH

By the

Rev. N. E. EGERTON SWANN, B.A.

HUMPHREY MILFORD
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On the Hebrew Prophets :

A. S. H. Scott and H. T. Knight, *Lessons from the Old Testament*. 2 Vols. Oxford University Press ; 3s. 6d. per vol.

Ottley, *Hebrew Prophets*. Rivington ; 1s.

Box, *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Rivington ; 1s.

Davidson, *The Book of Ezekiel* (Cambridge Bible). Cambridge University Press ; 5s.

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Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*. Macmillan ; 2s. net. [millan ; 6s. 6d. net.]

Raucshenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*. MacGore, *Christianity and Socialism*. C.S.U. Pamphlet, No. 24. Mowbray ; 1d.

and the literature generally of the C.S.U. and the Church Socialist League.

Also the following periodicals :

The Commonwealth. 2d. monthly. Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co.

The Church Socialist. 1d. monthly. Church Socialist League, IIC, Featherstone Buildings, High Holborn, W.C.1 [bury Square, E.C.4]

The Christian Commonwealth. 2d. weekly. 133, Salis-

The Challenge. 2d. weekly. Effingham House, Arundel Street, W.C.2

THE HEBREW PROPHETS AND THE CHURCH

I

WHAT WAS HEBREW PROPHECY ?

ONE of the most remarkable phenomena in the whole history of religion is that which displayed itself, under the name of 'prophecy,' among the Hebrews, playing an influential part in the national life of Israel for hundreds of years, and attaining its height between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C. It stands indeed by itself in history, exhibiting some striking features which are quite unparalleled in any other country or epoch.

What, fundamentally, was a 'prophet' ? If we are to answer briefly, it would be strictly accurate to say 'an inspired preacher of righteousness.' But that would be to class the Hebrew prophets with many other religious leaders in various lands both before and since the coming of Christ. Their distinctive characteristics can only be brought out by degrees, as we examine the content of their message, in close connexion with the historical circumstances in which it was delivered. Meanwhile it is important to remember this general description. The prophets have too often been regarded as principally foretellers of the future, rather than as proclaimers of God's Will to their own day and generation. The element of prediction, however, in their utterances, though not absent, was quite secondary and subordinate. They were forthtellers, rather than foretellers. 'Forthtellers of righteousness' is their most glorious title. This indeed every preacher should be. But we call the Hebrew prophets, in a special sense, *inspired* preachers, in virtue of the exceptional force and freshness of their teaching and of the elements of originality in their message.

Before proceeding further, we must try to gain some idea of the state of religion prevailing in Palestine about the middle of the eighth century B.C., when the great literary¹ prophets first appeared. Bear in mind that modern criticism has largely recast our ideas of the development of the religion of Israel. The dates to which many of the books of the Old Testament used to be assigned have been, by a practical consensus of scholars, altered by centuries. This has naturally involved also a very extensive rewriting of the history of Israel, as that has hitherto been conceived by the ordinary Bible-reader. A great deal as to the details is still uncertain, and scholars still differ from one another on many important points. But at least it may be taken as established that the Mosaic Law, as we are accustomed to call it, did not play at all that part in early Israelite history which used to be assumed. Whatever may have been the detailed history of the growth of the Law, and whatever the exact nucleus of it, great or small, which actually derived from Moses, at least modern criticism has rendered it practically certain that the system in its entirety was never proclaimed to the people authoritatively, or generally accepted by them, until the time of Ezra. Broadly speaking, it would seem to be true that the Law as a whole is later than the great prophets. We must not, therefore, for a moment suppose that the whole of the Mosaic Law, with the theology which it implies, was known to or, even in theory, recognized by the Israelites of the time of Amos. And that means that we must not think of the heathen practices, for which the prophets so constantly rebuke the Israelites, as we should think of similar offences on the part of a Christian congregation sinning against the light. It was not that they nominally acknowledged themselves bound by all that the prophets were striving to teach them and yet continually fell into acts of conscious apostasy. Their sin—such as it was—consisted rather in their inability to rise to the higher stage of religion, proclaimed to them by the prophets, with much the same novelty as the Gospel is preached to the heathen by Christian missionaries to-day.

¹ By 'the literary prophets' are meant those whose prophecies have come down to us in a written form.

The popular religion in Israel belonged at this date to much the same stage as that of the general mass of the surrounding Semitic nations. It would seem indeed that Moses had proclaimed a far higher ethical idea of God. But we know little of the historical work of Moses. We cannot, with any certainty, compare his teaching with that of the great prophets of the eighth century. Yet it is highly probable that he is to be placed rather on a level with them, than with any leaders in the intermediate period. At any rate, it is certain that he was the bearer of a message constituting a marked stage in God's progressive revelation of Himself. Whether or not Moses was actually a monotheist, at least he demanded a strict monolatry—that is to say, the *worship* of only one God, whether other gods were believed to exist or not. 'Thou shalt have none other gods but Jehovah,' was his war-cry. How far the mass of the people rose to the height of his religion is another matter. It would seem indeed that the obligation of the sole worship of Jehovah was generally recognized—though it is usually held by modern scholars that the Ten Commandments were not at that time commonly known or acknowledged. The lower forms of religion denounced by the prophets seem to have commonly taken the shape of the nominal worship of Jehovah after the manner in which the surrounding heathen worshipped their gods; such departures as the attempt of Ahab to introduce the cult of the Baal of Tyre were quite exceptional.

But the value of such monolatry depends on the ethical character attributed to the jealous God. And here the effect of Moses' teaching does not seem to have been great or lasting. There are, it is true, indications that Jehovah-worship, as Israel brought it with them from the deserts, was markedly purer than the indigenous religion of Canaan. But in the new environment it rapidly deteriorated. The cultus was approximated to that of the land; the various local Baals too would seem to have been widely identified with Jehovah or Jehovah with them, just as, long afterwards, local deities in Europe became identified or amalgamated with various Christian saints. Whatever may have been the measure of response which Israel made to

the Mosaic revelation, to a considerable extent it is true that after the settlement in the promised land 'they were mingled with the heathen and learned their works.'

Jehovah then was, in the minds of the Israelites of this period, their national God in just the same sense as Milcom was the God of Ammon and Chemosh the God of Moab. It was taken for granted that every nation had its own distinct tribal God. All were equally real and something like equally powerful. Each bore sway, normally and directly, only within the borders of his own land. If Jehovah's power was to be exerted in a battle beyond the frontiers, this could be best secured by carrying into battle the ark which was thought to transport His local presence. Each people was practically as necessary to its God, as the God was to the people. There was thought to be some kind of physical non-ethical bond between them. The God might at times be offended, though this would not be likely to be on account of any real sin in the moral sense. When He was offended, the obvious course was to propitiate Him with material sacrifices. An unusually precious sacrifice, like the offering by the King of Moab of his own son on the wall of his besieged capital, might stir up the God to an exceptional outburst of energy. Clearly the Israelite historian endorses the Moabite view as to the agency which caused Israel's defeat on that occasion; 'There came great wrath [i.e. from Chemosh] on Israel.'

The popular religion then moved in the main on the plane of the 'natural man.' Jehovah was simply the God of fruitful seasons, filling men with food and gladness. The people had only to fulfil the ritual punctually, and His material gifts would be showered on them automatically. The great goods of life were, to these devotees, material prosperity in all its forms and the most obvious pleasures of sense, eating, drinking, and so forth; and the freest indulgence in them, unshadowed by any moral scruples, was an appropriate way of keeping a religious feast. Even dionysiac and aphrodisiac revels were recognized as religious observances, and were widely and openly practised at Jehovah's own shrines.

All these degraded forms of worship the early prophets endeavoured to sweep away by the uncompromising pro-

clamation of Jehovah as, above all things, a *righteous* God ; ' the righteous Jehovah loveth righteousness.' He cared, the prophets insisted, for nothing else. Outward acts of worship were only acceptable at all, in so far as they expressed a genuine devotion of heart which proved itself in an upright life. The essence of prophetic religion is well summed up by Micah :—' Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? ' Hence a gulf separated the true religion of Jehovah from the cults of the Canaanite Baals. Any syncretism of the two was apostasy from Jehovah. The mass of the nation, the prophets often proclaimed, had abandoned the God Who brought them out of Egypt. It was moral character, they contended, that constituted the true identity of that God ; the mere name, divorced from that idea of God's character which, to the prophets, it necessarily connoted, counted for little. To worship an unethical God, however much the worshippers might *call* him Jehovah, was to go after false gods.

Hence the prophets set themselves, all along the line, against the base passions and the low ideals to which human nature is so prone. At bottom the forces of opposition were the same with which true religion still has to contend. The two gigantic evils of lust and intemperance, which we find them constantly denouncing, are with us still—massive, entrenched in our society, buttressed by powerful vested interests. It is true, we have gained one very great point. These forms of sensual indulgence no longer shelter themselves under the cloak of religion. The association of the two constitutes the peculiar vein of subtle hideousness which we feel running through many of the dark pictures which various prophets paint of their times. Sexual immorality in particular was so closely interwoven with religious infidelity, that it became for the prophets a symbol of the latter. The nation, they felt, had been unfaithful to its true husband, Jehovah, and entered into loose relations with heathen deities. The idea is worked out very

fully, and in a particularly touching manner, by Hosea, to whom its tragedy and pathos had been powerfully brought home by the experience of his own married life. So closely do the prophets often connect, in their denunciations, the two kinds of infidelity, that it is sometimes difficult to say whether 'adultery' and 'fornication' are meant, or meant chiefly, in the literal or in the symbolical and spiritual sense.

But the prophets are by no means content with denouncing such sins as drunkenness and impurity. Against these, considered as strictly personal vices, Christian preachers have never failed to bear the strongest testimony. There is, however, another vast tract of human wrong-doing against which they have not always contended with equal constancy, but which forms one of the most prominent topics of the Hebrew prophets. This is the field of social justice. The prophets were never in the least inclined to suppose that God's demand for righteousness can be satisfied merely by purity and self-control in the more private and personal conduct of individuals. They were passionately convinced that Jehovah insisted on full justice in all the manifold relationships between individuals which go to make up social life.

Their attitude has been well described by Bishop Gore : ' The prophets of the monarchical period lived in an age when the land of Israel was passing from the peasant proprietors to the great owners, who " added house to house and field to field " ; when direct access to the soil, the chief capital of the country, was thus passing into few hands ; when labour was becoming dependent, and was being exploited and sweated by its masters. Thus there was luxury at one end of society and poverty at the other. And the denunciation of this state of society is their constant and almost monotonous theme. God, they proclaim and insist, is on the side of the poor. He is the God of the helpless. To exact labour without paying a sufficient wage to the labourer is to offend God. Luxury and accumulation of property is denounced, while manual labour is held in honour. The prophets are content to present the broad picture, with its broad contrasts, without qualifying considerations ; and they claim that God's will must be done ;

that the law of justice must be practically recognized ; or that God will judge and punish His people for the injustice of society.' ¹

Social unrighteousness too was very closely bound up with the formal worship. For the rich, whose wealth, as we have seen, was in large part wrung from the poor by all kinds of economic oppression, were as diligent attendants as any class at the sacred places, particularly at the great festivals. They offered sacrifices and held luxurious religious feasts out of the proceeds of their wrong-doing. And since it was they who had the wherewithal, they must necessarily have been the principal supporters of the priests and the cultus. The established religion in any age is always in very large measure dependent on the well-to-do classes. Hence, the danger of the intrusion of Mammon into the sanctuary of God is one against which we have ever to be on our guard.

This social note is struck with startling boldness by Amos, the earliest of the literary prophets. He makes it the very first of the transgressions of Israel that 'they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes ; that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek.' And he continues : 'They lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been [no doubt, unjustly] fined' (R.V.). He rebukes the fashionable ladies of Samaria, with a kind of burly rudeness, for revelling in luxury on the proceeds of their husbands' injustice :—'Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan [you Alderney cows, as we might say], that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by His holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that He will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks, and ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her.' He foretells in concise and trenchant language the coming downfall of all this luxury : 'I will smite the winter house with the summer house ; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses

¹ Gore, *Christianity and Socialism*. C.S.U. Pamphlet, No. 24, p. 8.

shall have an end, saith Jehovah'—thrilling words, which happily form the parting shot of one of our Sunday Lessons.

This social message was developed with particular insistence by Isaiah. His great first chapter, so appropriately appointed to be read in our churches on Advent Sunday, is full of it. Mere outward forms are nothing; animal sacrifices, incense, solemn assemblies—church-worship, in short, in all its forms, is, considered in itself as mere outward observance, worthless. It can only possess value, in so far as it is a spontaneous and heartfelt expression of an *ethical* religion. The Jews of the day offered no worship of the heart; God therefore can only close His ears to their prayers and praises. 'Your hands are full of blood;' doubtless the blood of those who had perished, from starvation or otherwise, through the iniquitous awards of the venal judges whom Isaiah goes on to denounce, and through the rapacity of the landlords whom he attacks in later chapters. 'Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.' Repentance always means to Isaiah something very concrete; he would lead a comfortable modern congregation out to the nearest slum and tell them to repent of that. Particularly earnest is he about the land problem. The land, he is sure, belongs to Jehovah and is given by Jehovah to His *people*, in order to be used justly for the good of them all. But his interest in social reform is not primarily economic; his demand for justice in such matters is an essential part of his religious faith. For him the thought of Jehovah at all times dominates everything. *His Will*, the prophet insists, must prevail on earth, and mould all human life to its inexorable demands of righteousness. Thus Isaiah is not to be put in line with political agitators or the propagandists of any economic panacea. It would be absurd to claim his authority for any particular programme, peasant proprietorship, land nationalisation, the single tax, or any other. But of the general principle he is certain; namely, that God is the owner of the soil, and that He is a God of Justice, and that the land of any country must be fairly used so that the whole population may share fully in its amenities.

And he would equally insist, in our own day, that, by whatever exact methods, this should be put into practice. The passionate cry of all land-reformers who have felt anything of a religious devotion to their cause, is voiced by him in the classical outburst: 'Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!'

To pass on to a much later date, we find the social enthusiasm still undiminished in Ezekiel. This is the more striking owing to the great change in the prophetic outlook which, as we shall have to notice more fully later, Ezekiel represents. He is a priest, and that not only by birth and calling, but in his religious ideals. But he is no mere ritualist; he is insistent on the institutional side of religion, because he sees so clearly that, in the circumstances of the time, a Church and its ordinances form the only practical safeguard of true religion. The essence of this he finds, every whit as much as the earlier prophets, in the idea of the righteous Jehovah who loveth righteousness. And righteousness means to him nothing narrower or less social than it meant to his predecessors. His great thirty-fourth chapter (which again is happily appointed as a Sunday Lesson) is perhaps the most remarkable social sermon in the whole Bible. He turns upon and rends the princes and other leaders of the nation for their misgovernment and their selfish feathering of their own nests. 'Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?' 'The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost, but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.' Later on in the chapter Ezekiel goes on to condemn the rich people of the day generally for their injustice and economic oppression, and to announce God's judgement between rich and poor. 'Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and

I will judge between cattle and cattle.' And addressing the fat cattle in particular, he demands: 'Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.' The concluding words convey a warning which is needed whenever and wherever there are rich and poor. A thinker so cautious in regard to social questions as Dean Rashdall asks: 'Are we not all apt to forget the perfectly indisputable truth that there is only a limited amount of wealth at any given time for the community to divide, and that it is not possible, by any contrivance or hocus-pocus of economic sophistry, to show that I can take more of it for myself without somebody else taking less?'¹ Those who, however unconsciously (and it usually is done quite unconsciously), monopolize an excessive share of material good things leave only their scraps, as it were, and those in a tainted and befouled state, for the masses, whose total conditions of life are thus needlessly depressed.

This cry for social justice has not died away even in Malachi, one of the very latest of the canonical prophets. It is true that he evidently belongs to the period of the decline of prophecy. He lays an excessive emphasis on merely ceremonial matters, and in one passage he even treats the due payment of tithes and offerings to the Temple as the one all-important matter which is to decide the standing of the nation in the sight of God, as the *articulus stantis vel cadentis respublicæ*. But there is another side to his teaching; still he can proclaim, with all the old robustness: 'I will come near to you to judgement; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts.'

The religion of the prophets then is one of practical righteousness along the whole line of life, inspired by the

¹ Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, p. 207.

faith and fear of the righteous Jehovah. We are accustomed to contrast this type of religion with the priestly type. And there is a great contrast between the two. But it is a mistake to suppose that this was the real contest in the religious world, when Hebrew prophecy was at its height. The priestly system as we find it, for instance, in the Book of Leviticus had not yet been developed. The enemy which Amos and Isaiah had to fight was not a too priestly version of the ethically pure religion of Jehovah, but, as we have seen, a grossly naturalistic heathenism. The priests of the time of Amos stood for this low kind of worship, and on that account were denounced by the prophets; but that is quite a different thing from the rivalry of priest and prophet, as we, with the completed Old Testament in our hands, are apt to picture it.

What really happened, in fact, might much more truly be described as a gradual conversion of the priests by the prophets. Still, it is true that the attitude of the prophets of the monarchy towards the sacrificial and priestly system is distinctly complex, and varies considerably at different dates. The earlier prophets certainly attached very little importance to sacrifices or other outward ceremonies; and they seem clearly to deny that any particular rites are actually commanded by Jehovah. But they do not seem to have had any fundamental objection to all ceremonial in itself; they had no horror of 'Ritualism' as such. They denounced ritualism indeed in some sense; but what they were attacking was only ceremonial pursued for its own sake in complete isolation from any aspiration after social righteousness and holy living.

Isaiah, for example, the author of some of the most anti-ritualistic passages in the Old Testament, was the author also of a great reform, which marks a decidedly important new departure. Amos had appeared like a thunderbolt and vanished, leaving nothing behind him but a transient shock. Hosea had been equally a voice crying in the wilderness. But Isaiah was a statesman, and laboured, of deliberate and set purpose, that there might be some permanent result from his ministry and that the gains so won might be established for the future on a secure basis. He fully recognized the necessity for a cultus, and earnestly

desired the purification of the existing rites. To this end, he fastened on the importance of the temple of Jerusalem, where the worship could be most easily controlled. He aimed at a centralization of the cultus at this sanctuary, and waged war on the manifold local high-places which could not be so constantly watched. With this end in view, he formed an alliance with the Jerusalem priests, or some of them. A considerable band of disciples gathered round him, enthusiastic for the new religious order that was shaping itself. These formed the righteous 'remnant' within Israel, and may be regarded as the first beginnings of a real *Church*, standing for the higher Jehovah-worship. King Hezekiah was won for the new proposals, and carried out an important religious reformation. The exact extent of this is indeed still a matter of dispute among scholars. However, there seems no doubt that it involved a considerable purification of the worship at Jerusalem, and some heightening of the primacy of the Temple over the various local centres of worship. Indeed, there can be little doubt that Hezekiah made a definite attack on the 'high places,' or some of them, though he does not seem to have suppressed them so completely as has often been supposed.

His work was completed about a century later by Josiah, who totally abolished the local sanctuaries and centralized the worship entirely at Jerusalem. This reformation was based on a law-book discovered in the Temple, which is commonly supposed by scholars to have been the nucleus of our Book of Deuteronomy. Jeremiah's ministry commenced in Josiah's reign, and his language and thought show many resemblances to Deuteronomy. He evidently belonged to the school which rallied round that book and supported Josiah's reforms. He was too himself a priest. Hence we are bound to associate him in the closest way with the purified religious institutions then brought into force at Jerusalem.

Yet Jeremiah was singularly alive to the dangers of an exaggerated devotion to even the best-devised externals of religion. He constantly has to rebuke those who trusted to the mere presence of the Temple, as, in itself, a complete guarantee that Jerusalem could not fall, with their thought-

less cry, 'The Temple of Jehovah, the Temple of Jehovah, the Temple of Jehovah are these.' And, close as is his relation with the Book of Deuteronomy, this prophet no more than his predecessors allows that sacrifices or particular rites are actually commanded by Jehovah; 'I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.' Nay, Jeremiah looks forward to a time in the future when all symbols, and apparently all priesthoods and sacrifices, would be done away. In particular, he foretells the disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant; 'They shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah: neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it.' The 'new covenant' of those days would need the guarantee of no outward symbol. 'This shall be the covenant. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts.' But all that *is* in the future; meantime, Jeremiah fully accepted the importance of externals as a present need, and was apparently as anxious as Isaiah that these should be brought to the highest attainable degree of purity.

A most decided further development appears in Ezekiel. He also was a priest; and he lays a stress on the priestly side of religion to which no sort of parallel can be found in any earlier prophet. In large part this is due to the change of circumstances. In Isaiah's day, for example, the great problem was to deliver the cultus from the grip of immoral and materialistic religion, and make it a fit expression for the true worship of Jehovah. That task was now in the main accomplished. In so far as heathenism was still secretly practised—as to some extent it was, even within the precincts of the Temple till the very last days of its existence—Ezekiel denounces it as severely as any of the prophets. But this was now only a minor task. The main problem, after the fall of Jerusalem, was to induce the exiled people still to rally round the accustomed centre of worship—even if they could only do so in hopeful imagination, as they thought of the future. Apart from some concrete religious system to hold them together, they would have been in serious danger of drifting away from their allegiance to Jehovah as completely as the northern tribes

appear to have done after the fall of Samaria. Hence Ezekiel labours at the task of making vivid to their minds, and dear to their hearts, the vision of the Jerusalem that is to be. He combines most remarkably the prophetic and priestly characters. His denunciations and warnings display, as we have to some extent seen, the true prophetic ring. But he passes straight from some of the finest passages in Hebrew prophecy, such as his fourteenth chapter with its recurring weird refrain, 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord Jehovah,' to regulations about priests and sacrifices and temple furniture, elaborated with all the meticulousness of the Levitical code.

This new departure marks no doubt the eve of the decline of prophecy, but it means also prophecy getting to business. Prophet and priest alike are necessary to the affecting of a reformation. No considerable improvement in popular Israelite religion would ever have come about, if the initiative had been left to the priests themselves. The prophet had to appear and stir mightily, the dry bones. But he could not, directly and unaided, have converted—certainly he would not have *permanently* converted—the mass of the people. His work was soundly and safely based, only when he had got on his side a body of priests who were able to make ethical Jehovah-worship the established religion. This, after the Return, was thoroughly done. A programme, in substance that of Ezekiel, was by degrees carried out, largely through the exertions of the prophets of the day. The Temple and its worship became the centre of the restored nation to an extent never known in pre-exilic times. Within a century too there followed the mission of Ezra, who proclaimed the now completely elaborated Law, codified as in our present Pentateuch. This formed a hedge, still more jealously guarding the Chosen People against heathen permeation. Isaiah's Church within the nation had now become the Church-nation.

Similarly, every reformation has to be embodied in a cultus and safeguarded by a priesthood, if it is to win general acceptance, and, above all, if it is to prove lasting.

No doubt this process of solidification always involves some loss as compared with the full fervour of the prophetic crusade at its height, and it carries with it a possible danger of serious corruption. But yet it is necessary ; religion, to win the world, has to submit to an incarnation which means a certain self-emptying and self-humiliation. The Word has indeed to be made flesh.

Above all must religion become priestly and institutional, if it is to work effectively upon the whole life of the *nation* as such—and national the prophets' religion was above all things. They were Hebrew patriots. They believed with passionate intensity in God's high calling of their nation. The God to Whom they appealed was always that Jehovah Who had brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And yet they never, like the leaders of the popular religion, interpreted this election of the nation as a mere unethical favouritism. They did not dream of any physical bond between Jehovah and His people, or suppose that there was any fated inevitability in His championship of them. The righteous Jehovah, they felt certain, had called Israel precisely *to be righteous*. Disloyalty to this call would infallibly bring severe chastisement, and if persisted in to the bitter end, might theoretically result in the final casting-off of the nation by Jehovah ; though in practice the prophets seem never to have been able to contemplate this steadily as an actual possibility.

This subordination of the prophets' nationalism to their belief in a righteous God, supreme over all the earth, necessarily meant that it was no narrow or exclusive nationalism. They recognized, and at times insisted on, the just rights of other nations ; they did not wish Israel to dominate over these or trample them down. Thus Amos declares that, just as Jehovah had brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, so He had brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir ; and he makes it the chief transgression of Moab, calling for God's punishment, that ' he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.' He is concerned for the law of nations when it is Edom, as much as when it is Israel, that suffers from its violation. And the tone thus set at the first by Amos is, on the whole, that of all the canonical prophets. The

high-water mark of this universalist spirit is touched by Isaiah, when he makes it a characteristic of that Kingdom of God on earth for which he hoped, that 'in that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land : whom Jehovah of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.' Here no more than a certain religious precedence, in virtue of their possessing the only legitimate temple of Jehovah, is attributed to Israel ; Egypt and Assyria are clearly represented as at least equals of Israel in all other respects.

This tradition of religious universalism is most touchingly represented, in the Old Testament, by the story of Jonah. This book is very probably founded on historical fact in the shape of a mission to Nineveh actually undertaken by that prophet. But, whether this is so, or whether it is wholly a work of fiction only intended as a parable, in either case it witnesses to the liberal views held in the particular prophetic circle in which it was composed after the Return from the Exile.

However, even within the universalistic school, few rose to the height of the great passage in Isaiah. Other prophets, when they do look for an extension of the blessings of Jehovah-worship to foreign nations, are apt to associate this with some kind of vassalage of those nations to Israel. And even such religious universalism, in itself, is only occasional. In one type of view which rather tends to predominate in the later period of prophecy, the heathen, or at any rate those nations who had been Israel's special foes, are represented as wiped out wholesale in a final Armageddon. We must not of course expect that the duty of the forgiveness of enemies should have been fully grasped before our Lord's coming ; and indeed it is a doctrine which proves very hard for even the sincerest Christians to assimilate. Still, to do them justice, those prophets who look for a final supremacy of Israel and decisive overthrow of her rivals, expect this to be brought about by Jehovah in His own way and only in His own good time. They do not stir up their countrymen to aggressive war, or exhort them to snatch at political dominance. Their desire for vengeance on foreign aggressors—

wrong as it is on Christian principles—is on a totally different moral plane from unprovoked aggression or disregard of others' just claims. The prophets ever stand for justice and right dealing towards other nations. Particularly remarkable in this connexion is the case of Jeremiah. He was undeniably in strictness of terms a pro-Chaldean. But that does not mean that he was any the less a true patriot; genuine patriotism does not mean crying, 'My country, right or wrong,' whenever a war arises from whatever cause. It was precisely out of real love for his country and regard for her highest interests, particularly for her fidelity to Jehovah, that Jeremiah opposed, from first to last, the revolt against Babylon. He was moved to do so, partly no doubt because he saw its hopelessness, but largely because it was a breach of a solemn treaty and of an oath of vassalage taken in the name of Jehovah.

The nationalism then of the prophets is, on the whole, a temperate and righteous nationalism. The full claims of internationalism however they were, for the most part, far from realizing. The enforcement of these was reserved for the Catholic religion to be inaugurated by the Incarnation. But Christian universalism in no way abrogates the nationalism of the prophets. We still need to learn national religion from them. On the political side, we can only be true internationalists (as the very word teaches us), if we are first sound nationalists. And on the religious side, the Catholic Church is legitimately mediated and represented to us by a national Church with its distinctive methods and outlook.

Such, in broad outline, is the character of the prophetic religion. How did the prophets come to hold it, and to preach it so confidently and with such a tone of authority? Even if it could be reasonably suggested that Moses had taught all that they taught, and that the tradition of his teaching had been continuously preserved in certain esoteric circles, that would only remove the question a stage further back. But in fact, it seems clear that there was no continuous tradition preserved during the intervening centuries by any professional organization of prophets or by any organized Church of the faithful. The prophetic guilds of which we read from an early period

did not as a whole represent a very high level of religion. Their 'prophesying' is frequently spoken of in a way which shows it to have been quite wild and incoherent. Their chief function was that of mere soothsaying. And even in this they do not seem to have enjoyed a very high reputation for reliability. This comes out clearly in the scene before the march against Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoshaphat evidently thinks that the true 'word of Jehovah' is to be found somewhere among the prophets; he is not satisfied, however, with the unanimous voice of a multitude of them, but still eagerly demands in addition the individual verdict of Micaiah. And in him we find a specimen of a far higher and more ethical type of prophet. Such individuals no doubt arose from time to time out of the ranks of the professional guilds. Thus Nathan comes forward and rebukes David in the very manner of an Amos or an Isaiah. Similarly Elijah rebukes Ahab in the matter of Naboth's vineyard. Indeed in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha we have one of the marked crises of advance in God's progressive Revelation of Himself. And such men kept in close touch with the organized guilds, and were no doubt able to use these to some extent for the propagation of their message. But there is a very marked gulf between them and the great literary prophets. Elijah and Elisha seem to have had no objection to the calf-worship, which was of course ostensibly Jehovah-worship. And their ethical level was far below that of their greater successors. Their methods were violent and bloody, and Hosea announces that Jehovah will avenge 'the blood of Jezreel'—the blood, that is, shed in Jehu's revolution, instigated as it was by Elisha.

Thus, even if Amos had in no way gone beyond Moses, at least he made a completely fresh beginning in republishing his message. And this character of spontaneity and originality belongs to all the great prophets. Each feels individually seized upon by a message, to which an inward impulse overpoweringly drives him to give utterance; 'The lion hath roared,' bursts out Amos, 'who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?' And these later prophets are absolutely independent of the professional organization. Indeed Amos protests, as

if it were an insult, against the imputation of being a professional prophet: 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son.' The prophetic impulse lays hold of this man and that, in any walk of life. Amos was a herdsman; Isaiah belonged to high court-circles; Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as we have seen, were priests. There is no question of a professional tradition, propagated in an organized way or safeguarded by any kind of ecclesiastical authority.

Can then the message of Amos and his successors be explained on purely naturalistic grounds, as arising from the circumstances of their age? Well, undoubtedly their apprehension of Divine truth was psychologically *conditioned* at every turn. It was the contemporary experiences of the nation that enabled them to grasp fully and vividly the truth revealed to them about Jehovah's character and purposes; it was by reflection on these that they felt their way forward from point to point, their teaching thus growing gradually in clearness and fullness. But that is a very different thing from saying that their whole idea of the righteous Jehovah *originated* solely from such a train of reflection. No rationalistic critic has ever shown convincingly how the prophets' conclusions should have arisen out of the data taken in themselves.

What was the situation? The dominating factor of the time was the threatening advance of the great military power of Assyria. The records of expeditions of the Assyrian kings, as they have been unearthed amid the ruins of their mighty capital, Nineveh, take our breath away. Almost every year for centuries together their armies marched forth to conquer, overrunning practically the whole of lower Asia and occasionally penetrating into Egypt. This was the terrible power which, in the days of Amos, first began to threaten the security of the group of petty states, consisting of Israel and her neighbours. It was an awful portent. No wonder the more far-sighted were aghast at it. What would be the issue? Could any of these little peoples hope to survive? And, if not, what was the meaning of it?

Probably the mass of the Israelites took a very light-hearted view of the danger till the last possible moment. Were they not Jehovah's chosen people? What had they

to fear? When disasters began, they would say to themselves that Jehovah was momentarily offended with His people; let them but multiply sacrifices, and all would be well. On the other hand, when they were forced to recognize that actual ruin and overthrow were upon them, they could only conclude that Asshur, the god of Nineveh, had proved stronger than Jehovah. But the prophets had a very different answer. 'Yes,' said Amos, 'it is quite true, you are Jehovah's people. You only, He is saying to you, have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities.' Granted the idea of a righteous God of all the earth, and the explanation was simple. But the naturalistic theory entirely fails to show how the circumstances, taken in themselves, could have suggested the idea. Why did they lead the prophets to such totally different conclusions from those of the people?

Theorists of this type really assume that the prophets had, at least implicitly, in their minds the conception of ethical monotheism, ready to supply the needed explanation of the problem set to them. Of course, if the idea had once been somehow suggested to a man's mind, it would so beautifully supply the key to the situation, that he might well become in this way convinced of its truth. But the situation did not in itself contain any positive suggestion of such a hypothesis. The idea of 'ethical monotheism' is not really so simple a one as it is apt to seem to us; it does not readily suggest itself to the human mind as such, apart from a definite historical tradition. It comes natural indeed to us; it is part of our stock of mental furniture. It haunts, if often quite unconsciously, the thoughts even of the agnostic or materialist. Whether intentionally or not, he is, in fact, continually formulating his own views as against this particular theory of the universe, as being their most obvious antithesis. But this belief has been highly exceptional in human history; we forget how hardly this particular mental atmosphere was won for us in the past. And even extreme rationalists often, under the unconscious influence of an obsolete mode of theological thought, really assume that such religious ideas would necessarily be floating about, as at least vague possibilities, in the mind of a Hebrew prophet.

The essential point then is missing, when we have pushed the naturalistic method as far as we can. We can to a great extent exhibit scientifically the causes of each fresh development in the prophetic tradition; up to a point we can show how the prophetic religion first took shape, and why it appeared when it did. But there remains a huge gap between the conditions so far as we are able to analyse them and the issue. No solid ground can be shown for thinking that the situation must necessarily have given birth to such a theology, or even that such a theology could at all naturally have been expected to arise merely out of the situation alone. The ground was prepared; the conditions were eminently favourable for the classification, development, and fixing in men's minds of a monotheistic faith, if its rudiments could somehow be given. Granted some exceptional measure of spiritual illumination, granted some necessarily (to us) inexplicable impulse at the start, and the achievement of the prophets fits in naturally into the history. But a factor evidently came into play here of which science is altogether unable to render an account.

We must bear in mind how unique was the achievement of these men. They were the first who ever succeeded in so preaching ethical Monotheism that it could become a working religion for men in the mass. Indeed, with one somewhat doubtful exception, no other men, before or since, ever independently founded such a monotheistic religion. The one possible exception is Zoroastrianism. It is held by some present day scholars that the teaching of Zarathushtra himself was purely monotheistic, and that the dualism which we are accustomed to associate with his religion was merely a corruption which infected it subsequently for a certain period. On the other hand, it is held by some that the dualism was original, and only thrown off at a later date; in that case, one would naturally be inclined to suspect Jewish influence. However, supposing Zarathushtra to have taught monotheism, his measure of success cannot be compared with that of the succession of Hebrew prophets. His position in history is rather that of a Moses (supposing the latter to have been actually a monotheist) who found no successors; at a later period, when Zoroastrianism or Mazdeism was unquestionably

monotheistic, it is shown by its sacred writings to have been very imperfectly ethical as compared with the religion of the Hebrew prophets. Again, the unquestionably independent monotheistic tradition of the great Greek thinkers never was a religion at all; it was only a philosophy, even for the few who accepted it; and it never touched the masses. Further, the religion of the prophets culminated in the appearance of Jesus Christ, through whom it was expanded into a frankly universalistic religion. This has spread all over the world; it has shown itself capable of becoming a working religion for men of all races and of all grades of culture. Of all the religions which have so far appeared, it seems clearly to be the one most fitted as the faith of all mankind. It is difficult to regard all this as a chapter of accidents. We seem to see clearly in it the grand and steady sweep of one developing purpose. Here, we feel compelled to say, is the finger of God.

If we assume a God, immanent in all history, though working at certain crises in a specially obvious and palpable way, the whole thing is understandable. If such a God does enter into real contact and communion with faithful souls, in some degree within every age and race, then we need have no difficulty in believing that He wrought with exceptional force and vividness in the soul of this or that chosen prophet at the classical period of the main stream of His Revelation to the world. But no explanation can really satisfy us except that these men had experienced an immediate and very special contact of God with their souls. When Isaiah saw the wonderful vision by which he was called to his ministry, the visible imagery was no doubt but the form, largely subjective, in which the impression clothed itself to his imagination; but the whole circumstances, including the heroic story of his subsequent career, force upon us the conclusion that God was then and there, in a most direct sense, speaking in and to his heart. And throughout his work, as in that of all the prophets, the governing factor was a personal knowledge of Jehovah, wrought in them—so they felt sure—by a personal act of Jehovah Himself on their souls; a faith in Jehovah, itself the actual gift of Jehovah. We have no just ground for doubting their conviction. This divinely given faith in

and knowledge of God, co-operating with and heightening such natural shrewdness and power of observation as they possessed, enabled them to interpret continuously God's meaning in current events. In this consisted their inspiration. It did not mean a crudely miraculous communication to them of the details of their utterances. We must insist on the activity of the human mind and soul in the whole process. But we certainly must never ignore the supernatural element in it. Those who will admit nothing that cannot be embraced within the outlook of naturalism must make what they can of the history of Hebrew prophecy. But the Christian Church unhesitatingly affirms that the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, 'spake by the prophets.'

II

THE PERMANENT ELEMENTS IN THE PROPHETIC TEACHING

EACH stage of God's progressive Revelation has its special value in relation to His total message to mankind. No level is simply abrogated by later developments. Some details indeed in the Old Testament are, directly and in terms, corrected by our Lord or the New Testament writers; others we can see to be evidently inconsistent with fundamental principles of the Christian Revelation in which we now rejoice. But, except in so far as 'the mind of Christ' compels us to revise it in detail, the Old Testament still holds good for us. Taken by itself, its religion is inadequate; but much of it is of the utmost importance.

Now, of the Old Testament no portion is more precious than the Prophetic Books. What are the permanently valid lessons to which they bear witness for all later ages? In the very forefront, we must set the conception, with which they are saturated throughout, of the essential character of true religion. The prophets with one consent bear testimony that religion means to 'know Jehovah.' To the surrender of their hearts and minds to this knowledge they are ceaselessly exhorting their countrymen. A personal knowledge of God—and that a knowledge rather of the heart than of the head—is what is needed. Men must understand sympathetically the true character of God. They must have a vivid sense too of His constant Presence in human life. They must recognize, as a practical truth, that Presence in the circumstances of their own lives, and within the secret depths of their very souls. Thus apprehending vividly the all-pervading power and Presence of God, and entering, by the insight of sympathy, into an understanding of His character, they must needs love Him and heartily embrace His purpose for themselves and for the world. Hence they must, in all their conduct, be driven on by a heartfelt devotion to His holy will. They

must be consumed with zeal for the doing on earth of His righteousness—that righteousness which He both demands and inspires. To be intensely conscious, with one's whole being, of possessing and being possessed by God, and, in the strength of that consciousness, to be burning to set up the Kingdom of God on earth—that is the essence of prophetic religion.

In two directions at the present day is this ideal apt to be missed. A very large proportion of modern religion has become seriously secularized. Of course it is perfectly true, and very necessary to be enforced, that life must not be cut asunder into two departments, the religious and the secular. That is the false way in which, in the past, the distinction between the two has frequently been taken. Still the distinction in itself is a profound and a most necessary one. But it ought to be understood to refer, not to two separate classes of activity which go to make up life, but to two different ways of taking the whole of life. We may, on the one hand, treat this, just as it comes to us on the plane of ordinary observation—in other words, we may hold what we commonly call 'this world'—as supremely valuable in its own right; we may regard it as the most important reality there is, indeed as, for all practical purposes, the *only* order of existence. On the other hand, we may see it always on the background of the Eternal, and with all its values profoundly rearranged in consequence; we may insist on keeping it always in strict subordination to the eternal order, and on using it as a field for the expression of spiritual forces which have their roots beyond the world of sense.

Now unfortunately, at the present day, the ethical, particularly in its more social bearings, is too often made, in itself and almost divorced from any really supernatural inspiration, the whole heart and essence of religion. Practical righteousness, social enthusiasm, active work for every kind of secular improvement, have come to be substituted by many for all that, in the past, was commonly understood by religion. This development was greatly stimulated by that very influential book, *Ecce Homo*. It was indeed a work for which we may in many ways be grateful. It was eminently inspiring; and did enforce very finely certain much neglected

aspects of the Gospel. But it was certainly inadequate as a picture of 'the mind of Christ'; and, if treated as giving by itself a complete account of this, it may even be termed dangerously one-sided. It is not justifiable to identify, as *Ecce Homo* does, Christianity with 'the enthusiasm of humanity.' To do so is to forget that the principal passion of 'the man Christ Jesus' was, like that of the Hebrew prophets, an enthusiasm for God, which necessarily issued, as one of its most important results, in an enthusiasm of humanity. The ideal of this modern half-Gospel (we most certainly cannot call it 'false Gospel') is a secular Utopia, in which relations of perfect justice and brotherhood shall prevail between men. No doubt the sanction of this society is found in the idea of the Fatherhood of God. But the latter is after all held in a merely intellectual way; God remains quite in the background. The whole outlook is the mere apotheosis of humanitarianism. This is a totally different thing from the true Christian (and prophetic) idea of a life for mankind in God, issuing inevitably in perfect justice and brotherhood among men.

These remarks are of course in no way intended to disparage the value of the positive witness of this type of religion, so far as it goes. The truth of God is many sided, and demands divers channels of application. The Catholic Religion must find room for them all. But in it they are to be drawn together and the one-sided views of separated sections are to supply one another's deficiencies. All who aspire to hold the Catholic Faith ought to seek to enter individually into as full an apprehension as may be of the various sides of the truth. None should be content to hold one aspect alone in an unbalanced and exaggerated form.

On the other hand, another school, the very antithesis of the secularizing one, is still very prevalent amongst us. This too, as we shall see, has its strong points, and, within the limitations of its outlook, does accomplish something real and so far valuable. But if it is to become fully effective, its views must be enlarged and its rigid barriers broken down. Perhaps I may be allowed to quote from a printed sermon of my own:—'How very much of the preaching we hear might lead one to suppose that the

Christian life was principally a matter of making our communions regularly and devoting a sufficient amount of our time to religious observances ! No doubt this insistence on the externals of religion, unbalanced as it often is, is never entirely divorced from an insistence on good conduct in daily life. But yet, in this type of teaching, religion is so frankly regarded as, above all things, a matter of preparing for death, that our life in this world is altogether evacuated of its true significance. . . . And necessarily this profound error in evangelical theory reacts upon the type of practical exhortation which issues from it. It is true, as we have noticed, that a good life, that holiness, are insisted on. But the whole idea is that of keeping oneself pure from the defilements of this world in order to prepare for death and to be fitted to enter into the glorious Kingdom hereafter. And so holiness comes to be thought of in far too negative a way. The insistence is almost solely on abstinence from certain sins that have come to be conventionally recognized as such. . . . The whole idea of sin and of righteousness is . . . divorced from the really urgent ethical issues of the day. . . . The whole tendency is to confine the appeal to the conscience to the most purely private and personal departments of conduct ; such preaching keeps clear of all matters likely to raise too disturbing issues. . . . And so in spite of its earnest and passionate insistence on human sin and its fervent appeals to men to repent and fight against sin, yet in fact this widely prevalent school encourages men to acquit themselves far too easily. It ignores altogether at least half of the full scope and the full severity of God's demands. Its inevitable effect must be to make churchgoers think that some of the sins to which they are most of all prone—sins peculiarly widespread at the present day and among those which most deeply infect the collective life of society—are no sins at all. . . .

'It would be unjust indeed to deny the results that really have been accomplished by this kind of thing. It has produced a great stock of highly intensified piety in certain groups of the faithful. . . . Within such groups there is an immense amount of religious earnestness, of high aspiration, of intense desire to do the will of God, of

rare purity of soul, of power of prayer, and of spiritual recollection and concentration. . . . There is any amount of spiritual dynamic stored up in these . . . circles. It is there all ready to use. But unfortunately it is not being used; and consequently it is running to waste and spoiling. . . . And so we must find some way of getting all this good spiritual force out into action, of letting it loose on the world.'¹

The remedy alike for the comparative ineffectiveness of this school, and for secularism, is to be found in the true prophetic conception of 'knowing the Lord.' Here is the root of the matter. Having this, firmly grasped, within us, we shall blossom out naturally into an outlook on life which provides the true synthesis of our devotional and practical instincts.

The dividing lines of this modern cleavage do not quite coincide with those of the traditional controversy between 'Faith' and 'Works.' But there is a certain inner relationship between the two divergencies; and the latter debate, stated in the old terms, still makes itself heard at times among us. And the solution is exactly the same. It is evident that, as the prophets maintained, 'the righteous shall live by his faith.' If we are to live our lives nobly or, in any worthy sense, successfully, we must be able to trust to something. Hence, for the practical conduct of life it makes all the difference what sort of ideas we hold about the universe. These need to be such that we may be able to *trust* it, and to *trust* life. We must feel some confidence that the scheme of things provides scope for our nobler aspirations, and that we can rely upon elements in it that do not change amidst all the flux of details in the world. We must be able to feel safe with the universe, provided that our wills are sincerely directed towards the best that we can see. And, if we are to trust, we must, if our convictions are thought out, believe in some more or less definitely conceived Power or Being in which we may trust.

And what human nature as a rule peculiarly craves for is a living, loving God—a God Who really sympathizes with us in our difficulties and our infirmity, Who tenderly

¹ *The Commonwealth*, February, 1914, pp. 62-63.

yearns over us, Who, in a manner, identifies Himself with us. Just so do the prophets repeatedly represent Jehovah's heart as going out passionately towards Israel. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' 'In all their affliction He was afflicted, . . . in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them and carried them all the days of old.' We need, in particular, One to strengthen us and uplift us in that weakness of which all at times are acutely conscious, and by which all but the most self-confident continually find themselves heavily oppressed. Our craving is met by the prophet's word: 'They that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.'

But somewhat more than that, we want not a mere Strengthenener, but an actual Redeemer. If we are honest with ourselves, we must recognize that we constantly *fail* to be what we are, then and there, called on to be. We are very prone to fall. If we review our whole past life in the light of any worthy standard, it is deeply marked with such failure. We have gone repeatedly and very far astray. And the summed up result of all the past is in us; it conditions our present conduct and severely hampers our achievement. We need a real deliverance from its burden; we want something crucial and drastic to set us free. We must be recreated from within; a new principle of life must be implanted in us. And the Hebrew prophets again, at least from Isaiah onwards, knew God also as the Redeemer; they believed firmly in a really redemptive activity of God in the world. They thought of Him as going forth into the world of men, as laying hold of them and snatching them back from the power of evil, as instilling into them a new power of life. Hence it was trust in the faithful Jehovah which could alone give a safe basis for life. And in Jehovah, as depicted in the greatest passages of the prophets, we recognize the lineaments of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus there is no essential difference between their faith in God and that of the Christian.

Yet of course an important new element does appear with the gospel. What we want is to be able really to *have* this God for our God. And that is now possible for us, with a fullness and freedom that were not previously open to men. For it is precisely in Jesus Christ, and in Him crucified, that we find ourselves able to lay hold of God securely. In the life's work, and particularly in the death as the crown and supreme test of His faithfulness, of 'the man Christ Jesus'—God manifest in the flesh—did God's redemptive activity culminate. By means of His sacrifice of a perfect obedience, if we identify ourselves with it and by an active effort of faith appropriate its benefits, we can be delivered from sin and raised to a new life, as else we could not be. This it is which gives to our faith an assured certainty and a fullness of content which that of the prophets could not possess. But at bottom 'justification by faith' meant to them what it means (or ought to mean) to us.

It is true then that we are justified by faith, and, if we understand rightly the full character of true faith, 'by faith only.' But that is just because such faith is, by an inherent necessity, the foundation and inspiration of a life of active holiness, and issues in this so essentially and inevitably that it can never be thought of apart from its natural result. The two cannot be divorced; and can hardly, even in theory, be treated in complete abstraction the one from the other. Thus can we reconcile perfectly St. Paul and St. James, and the two streams of tradition which derive from them.

It follows too from all this that we have in the prophetic impulse the safeguard against the dangers of ecclesiasticism. As we have already seen, an institutional machinery of religion is indispensable. The Hebrew prophets themselves had to have recourse to its aid. It was only when their ideals had been safely embodied in ecclesiastical institutions, that those ideals triumphed. But, as we have also seen, the ideals at once suffered some loss even by the very fact of being thus embodied. The full ideal can never be expressed in its most glowing intensity by any institution. The spiritual temperature is inevitably lowered, at least a few degrees, when an originally prophetic or evangelistic crusade is superseded by a Church. And the Church is

always exposed to extreme dangers of cooling down almost to zero, and of becoming seriously infected by positive corruptions of manifold kinds. Outward observances, indispensable as they are to the corporate life of the Church, easily grade down into formalism. An intrinsic value too comes to be attached to the performance of this or that precise rite or ceremony; men get into the way of thinking that worship offered at some equivalent for Jerusalem or Gerizim is peculiarly acceptable in God's sight. And to the externals of worship in general a quite excessive importance is attached proportionally to the whole of religion. Customs and rules too become multiplied to excess, and also hardened into a rigidity that lays an intolerable restraint on the spontaneity and expansiveness of the religious spirit. Officials again acquire an arbitrary and despotic authority. The things that should have been for the Church's wealth are made unto her an occasion of falling.

And so, from time to time, the Church is sure to need drastic reform. When some great reformation has been carried out, it seems for a time that now the perfect outward expression of the Gospel has been found. All that had been obscured and forgotten appears now to shine out purely in the Church's life and worship, so that all men, it is thought, must henceforth inevitably take the true meaning. But the reformed order itself soon becomes a mere convention; the mere force of habit and repetition dims its brightness and reduces it to something dead and dull and meaningless. Once more there has to be a reformation.

And the unfailing source of inspiration for every reformation is the prophetic tradition. If no real prophet arises, when the need becomes acute, at least the more humbly endowed can find refreshment for their souls and guidance for the task that is set them, in the writings of the prophets of old. These are the standing rebuke to ecclesiastical stagnation and decline, and the perpetual source of renewal. The Church as a whole cannot normally live on their level. It is undoubtedly the verdict of history that the Christian Church has proved, as a fact, to be founded on Peter, a somewhat colourless theologian, and a man of compromise—as is evident from his conduct at Antioch. The religion of the Church as such is necessarily Petrine; and Petrine

religion is always in danger of becoming petrified religion. It continually needs to be stirred and effervesced with repeated freshets from the living waters of the prophetic fount.

But perhaps the most characteristic idea which the prophets have contributed to the developing tradition of religion is that of the Kingdom of God. They all look forward to a golden age when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, a time of righteousness and of happiness alike. Primarily this is for them always a national Kingdom, though, as we have seen, some of the prophets look for its benefits to be extended more or less fully to other nations too. Occasionally, though by no means regularly, the inauguration of this Kingdom is associated with a personal Messiah, a descendant and successor of David.

Now this idea of the Kingdom is a permanent contribution, of the utmost value, to the full and balanced whole of true religion. It is, further, of peculiar importance to us at the present day.

In the first place, in its national aspect it emphasizes a side of religion of which Christians have too often lost sight. It is not enough that individuals should be religious merely as individuals. A nation whose individual members were all the most exemplary Christians in their private lives would be a totally different thing from a Christian nation. Its public life as a nation might still be governed by blankly anti-Christian principles. The nation as an organic whole has to be christianized. There are such things as corporate repentance, corporate faith, corporate aspiration. These too are indispensable; imperative as individual conversion is rightly felt to be. It is necessary that religion should seize on individuals, as through all their various duties and needs, so, by no means least, through their functions as citizens. And religion is simply abdicating a large part of its true office, if, in this sphere, it merely preaches to its converts obedience to authority and self-sacrificing service to the State. Such doctrine may easily, as in Germany, only strengthen the hands of a practically atheistic State. Beyond that, it must be insisted on that the State in a Christian nation must be governed, in its corporate and official action, by Christian ideals. 'Righteousness

exalteth a nation'; and it is not exalted by the merely individual righteousness of its members, if that stands alone. The nation has to be righteous as a nation. On this the prophets were always peculiarly clear; '*O Israel!* prepare to meet thy God,' is their constant cry.

The nationalism of the Hebrew prophets, as we have seen, is, on the whole, a pure and enlightened one which insists on due regard for the rights of other nations. Hence their message is peculiarly needed by any nation occupying an imperial position. Imperialism has historically meant very different things. It may mean a lust to dominate other nations by force and to exploit them unscrupulously for the profit of the ruling race. And even within our own nation at the present day, some of those who have used the word most loudly have by no means understood it in the best sense. But there is a right and true Imperialism. It may mean a nation's recognition that, in the Providence of God, it has found itself the centre and leader of a world-wide Empire. In its imperial policy such a nation may honestly pursue the ideal of a freely willed federation of free peoples, and make it its deliberate aim to raise, if it may be, all its subject races ultimately to that status.

And similar principles, the prophets would teach us, must be applied also to foreign policy. The '*Realpolitick*,' of which we have heard so much of late—the cynically unscrupulous pursuit of hard material aims, in utter disregard of all claims of honour or of duty to foreign nations, such as is unequivocally advocated by Treitschke and his school—is a thing which all Christian peoples must utterly abhor. They must strive after perfect straightforwardness and good faith in their diplomacy; they must show that they honestly desire to be good comrades in a real comity of nations; they must steadily seek peace and ensue it.

Hence, it is part of the rightful function of religion to stimulate national idealism, and to provide the deepest sanction for this. It is its business too to interpret to a nation both its own past history and its various national experiences in the present. Every nation has its proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. But it specially concerns us to endeavour to understand how God has dealt, and is to-day dealing, with our own

people. If He brought the Israelites from Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir, did He not equally bring our own ancestors from their homes beyond the North Sea? If He overthrew 'miraculously,' as we call it, the host of Sennacherib, were not the gales which scattered the Spanish Armada equally 'miraculous'? And surely too a modern prophet must be able to trace God's hand, through guilt and shame, through undeserved preservation, through high opportunity and gallant endeavour, through disappointment and victory, in the chequered story of the Boer War and the resettlement of South Africa, of Indian unrest and Irish strife, and of this final life-and-death struggle for all that nation and country mean to us.

And what is true of imperial and foreign relations, must of course apply equally to the internal affairs of a nation. The great social problem of our time is a challenge to our religion of much the same kind as that which Amos saw in the social problem of his day; but it is a vastly more tremendous one. Here at every turn we find ourselves spurred on by the prophets' uncompromising denunciations of economic wrongs more or less parallel to those of our own day, and by their insistent demand that justice shall be done in these matters.

This prophetic ideal of social justice no doubt is far from a simple one. Justice in these matters is a slow growth, and one of the most difficult products of civilization. For long ages all men acquiesce in certain relationships between the members of society which the more enlightened conscience of a later time unhesitatingly condemns. Thus for centuries even Christian people took for granted the institution of slavery; yet to-day the whole owner-and-slave relation is universally felt to be, in itself, radically incompatible with Christianity. We must remember how vast is the field of social life and how delicate and complex are the inter-relations involved in it. And social relations are continually growing more intricate and more highly differentiated as civilization advances. Hence the mere intellectual difficulty of grasping the situation causes men to acquiesce in many things which are grossly anomalous in the light of the accepted ethical standard. In large part they have had perforce

to leave social institutions to be moulded by the mere unconscious drift of things. It is only very slowly, and at a late stage of civilization, that society as a whole becomes in any high degree self-conscious—that the collective conscience of the people is able to assert itself effectively over the whole range of public affairs, and deliberately to remould all accepted institutions in the interests of a clearly conceived social ideal.

Particularly in times of rapid transition are social affairs apt to get thus out of hand and escape the control of the best conscience of the age. In such crises mankind is simply overpowered by the sudden emergence of all kinds of new material amenities and luxuries, and swept off its feet by a torrent of unwontedly rapid wealth-production. In such a time terrible evils and injustices spring up, as it were, automatically, from the sheer difficulty of managing an unprecedented situation. Such was the position when Amos appeared. And a similar landslide on a far vaster scale was produced by the great industrial revolution in England at the dawn of the nineteenth century. So utterly did economic developments then get out of hand, that we have never since been able to overtake our problems; and meanwhile the new methods of production have been spreading all over the world, producing everywhere the same crop of evils.

But that is never the whole story. The confusion of such a time is sure also to give many openings to really evil-minded and unscrupulous men. If some of these are also men of energy and ability of a kind, or if they happen to occupy a strong economic position, they will find ample scope for oppression and extortion. And such men of course exist in every period. Yet, between the age of Amos and our own, there is a marked difference in the relative proportion of unconscious blundering and high-handed wrong-doing. At a date long before the Christian revelation, and in a rough and barbarous time, the latter doubtless was far commoner than to-day; while, on the other hand, in those simpler conditions the tide of impersonal tendencies was far less overwhelming. With us the open misdeeds of individuals in the field of industry and commerce cause but a very small part of our social evils. The

real difficulty is that the mass of men are still content to acquiesce too largely in the mere pressure of economic tendencies. The chief need is to awaken the human will, and concentrate it on ideals so high and so forcibly inspiring, that their renewing power may cleanse the diseased body of the commonwealth.

In all such times of change the ideal of social justice is the guiding star of mankind. The vision of the perfect Kingdom of God ever floats over the world of men, drawing them onwards and upwards. It may be apprehended, at the best, but dimly and in the rough; and certainly it ever lies far out beyond anything that is realized on earth. But yet it is definite enough and vivid enough to impel men to pass an utter condemnation on much that obtains in the society of any given time, and to give them positive guidance as to at least some improvements which are then and there capable of being accomplished. Happy are we, if it is given to us as individuals to attain a little fuller conception, than the average of our contemporaries, of what justice would involve; happier still, if we should be able to contribute practically, though in ever so humble a way, to the securing of some small bit of ampler justice in the affairs of society.

But the distinctively prophetic souls are consumed, in a special measure, by a passionate yearning towards God's Kingdom. The vision of it displays itself before their eyes with all the solid impressiveness of reality. They confront existing conditions abruptly with the full ideal, so far as they are able to give to it a definite content. They are apt to trouble little about practical difficulties, and not to weigh pros and cons over-nicely. They concentrate on the religious problem. And, from the religious point of view, the one thing that matters above all is that justice shall be done. It is true of course that each age must solve its own problems on its own lines, and in the light of due consideration of its peculiar conditions. The task is therefore largely a technical one; the prophetic enthusiasm must seek the aid of economics and statecraft. But these by themselves can never bring social salvation. Above all things is needed the gift of vision.

Here the prophets help us mightily by their glorious

pictures of the righteous and therefore materially prosperous Kingdom that is to be.

These (as might be illustrated indefinitely by quotations, did space allow) express by anticipation, for all time, the aspirations of all who, from age to age, yearn and strive for social justice. It is the same message which Frederick Denison Maurice took up so enthusiastically, when, to a Church sunk in religious conventionalism, he proclaimed Christ as the rightful King of all mankind, under Whose leadership the army of the faithful was marching to battle against all that maims and degrades human life—against sin, but also against poverty, ignorance, squalor, dirt, and disease. Falling in behind this ‘goodly fellowship of the Prophets,’ ancient and modern, we are all called on to set ourselves heart and soul to ‘build Jerusalem in England’s green and pleasant land.’

But not only so; even for the Hebrew prophets, as we have seen, the Kingdom, though primarily a national one, was not always solely so. Some of them exhibit a marked vein of internationalism and universalism. The Book of Jonah and the great evangelistic passages of the two Isaiahs are the charter of missionary efforts to the ends of the earth. And how much more must we dwell on and develop the most universalistic dreams of the prophets, seeing we are followers of the Risen Christ, who impressed on the mind of His infant Church the great command, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature’! Even under the fuller light of the new dispensation we can still derive the utmost inspiration for our missionary work from the great pictures, painted by the old prophets, of the time when ‘the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.’

Such then is the great contribution of Hebrew prophecy to our religion, namely, the vision of the Kingdom of God—the rule of God, recognized and welcomed as such, in all the relations of men on earth; remoulding into the pattern of righteousness all social customs and social systems, sanctifying all legitimate national aspirations and checking all national pride, arrogance, and brutality, and binding all mankind into a world-wide comity as common children of the one Eternal Father.

III

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF THE CHURCH

THE prophetic movement, as we have seen, gave birth to a Church. The spirit of prophecy had to find for itself a body; the ferment had to crystallize; the evangelical impulse had to seek the support of institutionalism. Thus some of the fundamentals at least of the prophetic religion were popularized, and were guaranteed a permanent footing in the world. The priest came to the assistance of the prophet, and, more or less successfully, perpetuated the proclamation of the latter's message. Henceforth the Church was—or at least claimed to be—the standing embodiment in the world of the prophetic tradition.

So, for some centuries, matters continued. Then there came a revival of the old prophecy. John the Baptist suddenly appeared like a portent—the first genuine prophet for several hundred years. He was succeeded by One greater than himself. Our Lord appeared, let us remember, within the then-existing Church. He, being true man, stood on its ground; He recognized to the full its legitimate, Divine commission. He was indeed a reformer; He was in revolt against the actual tone of Church-life and the actual policy of the official leaders of the Church. But He never made any attack upon the Church as such or its claim to a Divine authority. He came to call it to corporate repentance and lead it on to a wider sweep of fuller usefulness. He does not seem to have contemplated making any such revolutionary breach with the institution as, in the Providence of God, His followers were eventually led to make. Had the Jews of His day responded to the call, the Christian Church would presumably have been at least as continuous with the Jewish as the post-Reformation Church of England is with the mediæval Church of the land.

All this it is most important to bear in mind. It means that our Lord recognized Himself to be a member of the

Jewish—which, as we have just noticed, was, by rights at least, essentially the prophetic—Church, and that His very object was to recall it to its true prophetic principles and mission. Further, He frequently appealed directly to the authority of the Old Testament prophets. Thus, in a sermon delivered, early in His ministry, in the synagogue at Nazareth, He is recorded to have applied to Himself one of the 'Servant' passages from the second Isaiah. Indeed, there seem to be considerable grounds for believing that this prophet's vision of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah provided a form in which our Lord constantly envisaged His own mission and destined death.

Yet more, He adopted the very tone of the old prophets, and a considerable part of His teaching was devoted to the republication of their most characteristic messages. Thus His denunciations of scribes and Pharisees, His withering attacks upon all formalism in religion, all exaggerated reverence for externals, all reliance upon ritual performances, all setting of ceremonial correctitude above judgement, justice, and mercy, stamp Him as the successor of Isaiah and Jeremiah. With regard to the wider relations of life, too, the same holds good. As Bishop Gore states, in the work already quoted: 'When our Lord came, He moved about freely among rich and poor, teaching men by word and example that God was their Father, and all they were brethren, teaching them to live neighbourly and brotherly one with another. He did not shrink from intercourse with the rich, or from the imputation brought by such free intercourse—that He was "a gluttonous man and a winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners"; but it is impossible to deny that His sympathy was with the poor; that He was on the side of the poor; that His warnings and denunciations are mainly directed against wealth, and the desire of wealth, and the love of the power which comes with wealth and position; and that He could see no life weakened and depressed by the selfishness of power and wealth without indignation.'¹ Thus our Lord—whatever else and more He is—is assuredly the last and greatest of the Hebrew prophets.

¹ Gore, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 9.

Nor is the same note by any means absent in the New Testament writers. It is struck most resoundingly by St. James. His epistle stands out among the books of the New Testament as the one which is the most like, in general character, to the works of the great prophets. He adopts the very attitude and echoes the very language of those stern preachers of righteousness. In its solid practicality and its intensely ethical tone, his teaching forms a singularly close counterpart to theirs. In particular, in passages where St. James denounces social oppression and reinforces our Lord's warnings against the dangers of riches, he follows with singular closeness the precedents of Amos and Isaiah. Thus the full sternness and vehemence of the prophetic message have an undeniable place in the New Testament, the charter of the Christian Church and its classical standard of doctrine.

Further, there was in the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic Church a recognized order of 'prophets.' Of the work of these we know very little. But it may fairly be presumed that they were inspired preachers of the type familiar in Old Testament times. The whole of the historical circumstances, and the very name 'prophet,' make it highly probable that their ministry followed closely the model set by their Hebrew predecessors. The order died out at an early date. Individuals exhibiting a more or less similar inspiration have since then been, from time to time, raised up by God within the Church; but they have received no official stamp as prophets. By ceasing to recognize prophecy as the function of any special order, the Church may be said to have placed her prophetic office in commission. It must be supposed to be held in solution, as it were, in the whole body. Seeing that the Spirit of God is like the wind that bloweth where it listeth, we cannot expect that an inspired preacher shall always be raised up at any given time, when we might have desired his appearance. In the absence of any such, the Church herself must all the time be making the prophetic note heard in her teaching and worship, and giving due weight in all her work to the characteristically prophetic elements of religion.

All this means that the Christian Church is, according

to its true idea, the prophetic Church. It is the legitimate and divinely commissioned embodiment and representative for us of the prophetic tradition. One indispensable part at any rate of its work is to carry on the proclamation of the prophets' message, to reinterpret it from time to time in the light of the needs of each epoch, and to apply it effectively to the special problems of the day.

The legitimacy of institutional religion depends on the extent to which it is a living incarnation of, and a true sacramental vehicle of, the prophetic ideal. Prophecy alone without Church or sacrament is largely ineffective; it remains a mere voice crying in the wilderness. But Church and sacrament, unless informed by the genuine spirit of prophecy, are dead and soul-destroying forms; they are the mere grinning skull of religion. The true meaning of all Church-ordinances is to serve as an alphabet for the prophet's exalted utterance. What he, from time to time, arises to say fresh from his heart, and straight to the hearts of his hearers, that the order and rites and worship of the Church are intended to be ever silently proclaiming to the world.

The Church on earth is necessarily 'visible,' since it is intended to be the fellowship of those who are devoted to the cause of God. It is the special family of God in this world. In ideal and in intention it is the sphere where the family life, which all mankind, as the sons and daughters of the common Father in heaven, should be living, is to be most fully and perfectly lived. All its members should by rights be living together as true brothers and sisters in all the relations of daily life, as, in large measure, they actually did live in New Testament times and even in the second and third centuries. If the majority of its members were anything approaching what their professions bind them to be, the Church would shine before the eyes of the world as a marvellous example of what the social life of mankind may be; all men would bear her witness that God is in her of a truth. Meanwhile God, through the operations of His Providence in creating the Christian Church and overruling her development, has done all that is possible to enable her members to live as true children of Himself and true brothers and sisters

one of another. The ascended Lord, the faithful are convinced, lives in her midst, and all her members, if only they honestly strive to be loyal to the obligations of membership, are in closest living touch with Him. His Holy Spirit dwells peculiarly, though not solely, within her; within her borders He normally works more intensely and continuously than outside. External means of grace, too, of every kind are provided here in abundance to meet the various needs of human souls, and afford them all necessary strength and support in the mighty task of rising to the height of their great calling.

Into that family we are born by our Baptism, just as by our physical birth we are born into a particular human family; we are thereby formally implanted into the Church. We are regularly and, so to say, constitutionally endowed with all the glorious privileges of its membership, together with the no less glorious responsibilities which these entail.

But since the family life is so imperfectly lived by mankind at large, and since human sin has thrown up deadly forces warring in the world against the whole family ideal, the Church is not only a family, but also an army. It is the army of the Kingdom of God, out (so far as it is a true Church) to storm all the strongholds of unrighteousness in the name of God, to subdue the kingdoms of this world to become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. From this point of view, our Baptism is the entry of our name on the roll-call of God's army; we are then attested. When we come to years of discretion, we are called up. But not compulsorily; the summons is made to us, but it is left to us, in response to the summons, to *volunteer*, if we will, for active service. It is the bounden duty of all the baptized to volunteer; but neither the Church, nor even God Himself, can force us, if we refuse. The meaning then of our Confirmation is that, in it, we volunteer for active service. That is the human side of the rite. But it is also of the nature of a sacrament; it is a real means of grace. By means of it we are enabled to appropriate a special strengthening by the Holy Spirit for that warfare to which we then dedicate ourselves. It is, as one of the Fathers has called it, a 'sacrament for warriors.'

Continuing this idea, the Holy Communion or Eucharist, to the privileges of which we are admitted by our Confirmation, may be thought of as the military mess. It is a stirring and inspiring thought, and enforces an aspect of Communion which the average Churchman is far too apt to forget. Mr. G. K. Chesterton has put it with admirable force: 'Drink, for the trumpets are blowing for battle; and this is the stirrup-cup!'

But the most beautiful and touching conception of the Eucharist depends rather on the family aspect of the Church. It is the family meal. There the family gathers round the family board, presided over unseen by the Father-God, just as a human father sits at the head of the family dinner-table. And there, too, Christ, the Eldest Son, is present, spiritually, but no whit the less really, seated, as it were, in the place of honour at the Father's right hand. Let the matter be so thought of, and no Churchman who takes his membership in the Church seriously would dream of failing to claim his place at the family board. He could not bear to cut himself off from the obvious and natural fellowship of the family meal. He would not stop to ask what good he might expect to get from coming to Holy Communion, or require to be convinced, before he cared to come, that some specific grace is conveyed by the Eucharist which cannot otherwise be secured.

The Church is only really alive, when her essential character and that of her various ordinances are constantly presented, primarily and above all, in this light. That is their prophetic interpretation. The Church which does always so interpret them, and which proclaims by all means, in season and out of season, the great ethical and spiritual truths which are thus symbolized—the Church, further, whose ministers and official leaders bear witness to these truths by the actual spirit of their ministerial service, and whose rank-and-file members are zealous to practise them in every walk of ordinary life—that is the prophetic Church.

IV

HAS THE MODERN CHURCH THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY ?

HOW far has the Christian Church in fact been true to her prophetic mission as described in the last chapter ? As regards earlier ages, this question is discussed in other volumes of this series ; the answer here attempted will be confined to the Church of quite recent times, particularly in our own country.

Of course when we speak of the conduct of ' the Church,' many questions may be raised as to how and on what exact occasions ' the Church ' can be said to speak or act, and how precisely we are to distinguish her corporate procedure from the merely private activity of her individual members. However, the Church is after all a real entity. More than that, she possesses a corporate personality, or at least quasi-personality. She has a collective mind and soul, which are not the mere aggregate of the minds and souls of her several members. Such an idea no doubt is not, at first sight, easy to grasp. But, if we reflect, we shall soon recognize that any society—a nation, a university, even a propagandist organization of any kind—does develop a mind of its own, which persists in a recognizable shape, with only very gradual changes, from generation to generation. That mind is far from being identical with that of any component individual or any particular group of these. Indeed it is apt at times to strike out its own line in quite surprising independence of the anticipations of almost all the members. No doubt it is not really independent of their thoughts and feelings ; it is, in some way mysterious to us, the resultant of all their counterbalancing ideas and efforts—or rather of these, together with the tradition already established in the society. The body, with its mind as hitherto formed, powerfully moulds all its members ; but all of them in turn, in their very various degrees, contribute somewhat to remould continuously the corporate mind.

The Church then, regarded as such a corporate person,

can find, and from time to time does find, means of expressing herself effectively. She may do so through many channels and many representative agencies. In the Anglican communion we have no Pope, nor any one piece of machinery or organ of authority, whose action, and whose action alone, can be taken as being that of 'the Church.' Thus it is not, in all cases, easy to draw the line between corporate and merely individual acts or pronouncements. There comes a point at which the one shades off into the other.

Further, action which can be attributed with some confidence to 'the Church' may vary very much in the degree to which it bears an official or authoritative character. So far as formal authorization goes, in the Church of England a resolution of the Representative Church Council, including, as it does, a House of Laymen, would have the strongest claims to be considered as the corporate utterance of the whole Church. And, if this body were as thoroughly representative in fact as it claims by its title to be, we could have no more satisfactory method of ascertaining the Church's mind. Resolutions of the Convocations of the clergy, or of specially appointed committees of these, bear, in a somewhat lesser degree, this corporate character. The same is true of collective resolutions of the Bishops, whether of the Church of England or of the whole Anglican Communion assembled in the Lambeth Conference. Even acts of individual Bishops may, in a very high degree, commit the Church, for good or ill. When some deliberate and peculiarly public action is taken by a Bishop, precisely in virtue of his authority or prestige as such, this can hardly be regarded as the mere act of a casual individual within the Church. Thus the success of Bishop Westcott in bringing about the peaceful settlement of a very alarming coal-strike, through the celebrated Bishop Auckland conference, may fairly be claimed as a triumph for the Church. Again, in the current teaching, typical of the clergy as a whole or of a dominant school among them, we cannot refuse to recognize one expression of the voice of the Church. Even privately initiated memorials or manifestoes, if signed by a really considerable proportion of either the clergy or

the faithful laity, and not representing merely a group or section, may bear a considerable measure of this corporate character. The exact way in which, or organ through which, the Church's corporate personality finds voice or takes action is immaterial, so long as, in any given instance, we have sufficient reason, considering all the circumstances, to recognize an, at least partial, emergence of that personality. In this sense, in what follows many acts and omissions are attributed to 'the Church'; and, when it is said that 'the Church' ought to have acted in such-and-such a way, it is meant that, by whatever methods and through the agency of whatever individuals, the corporate person, *Ecclesia*, ought to have made her mind known unmistakably to the world at large.

Now, if we look at the modern Church as a whole, until very recent years, we undeniably must be struck at once by one very great difference between her religion and that of the Hebrew prophets. Theirs, as we have seen, is essentially a national religion; it is concerned, above all things, with corporate faith, with corporate hope, with corporate repentance; the sins in attacking which it expends the most time and vehemence are great public and collective sins. Our modern religion on the other hand, until quite lately, has been almost wholly an individual religion. In so far as it has not been a mere private affair between a man and *his* God, that has only been because, in certain streams of tradition, a particular religious authority and a particular discipline of salvation have been urged as indispensably necessary. The function of the ecclesiastical and sacramental system has still been held to be simply to bring a massive force to bear on the salvation of individual souls. That salvation has been held to consist solely in a certain inward attitude of the soul to God, together with purity of conduct in the strictly private and personal aspects of life. This is certainly a very inadequate interpretation of the idea—which so peculiarly belongs, by right, to the Catholic Church—of 'the common salvation.'

The Church has been right indeed in holding that the problem is, above everything, one of individual conversion and of individual faithfulness in practical life. Religion

must be individually appropriated, if it is to be worth anything. Its deepest and most indispensable element is after all expressed by the celebrated formula—inadequate, as it is, if taken as a complete description of religion—‘God and the soul; the soul and its God.’ The Church can never rely on swaying masses of men by the kind of light and superficial waves of feeling by which elections are won or strikes are engineered. For her to give herself up to the gaining of the world by such methods is to lose her own soul. But where the Church has so often gone seriously wrong, is in thinking that it is enough that Christians shall show their Christianity by merely doing their best within those relationships which the existing social and governmental system provides. That system itself, church people have too often been encouraged to think, is something as completely given from the outside as the weather or the geography of one’s country; it is something to which faithful Christians must simply submit, as the inscrutable will of God.

Starting with this assumption, religionists have often held that the Gospel has nothing to do with anything civic or economic, that it must, on principle, ignore a man’s functions as a citizen. At the best, these are regarded as completely irrelevant to the Christian life; they are activities which the Christian carries on, if he engages in them at all, side by side with the Christian tracts of his life and on entirely different principles. At times it has even been held and taught that all interest in the duties of citizenship or social amelioration is a dangerous ‘worldliness,’ from which it behoves all converted persons to abstain strictly.

But when the distrust of participation in public affairs has not been carried to this extent, when doing one’s duty as a citizen has been taught as part of Christian duty, the function of a citizen has usually been thought of in an almost wholly passive way. It has been held to be summed up in obedience to the powers that be. In the Church of England, for example, a sense of public obligation, public spirit of a sort, have frequently been inculcated. But this has ordinarily meant only that a man is to obey the State; to serve, and, if necessary, sacrifice himself for, it.

But such service is a mere matter of doing what he is told; 'his not to reason why.'

This view is a baleful legacy of the Tudor times in which our Anglican formularies were, in the main, shaped. In that age such an attitude was perfectly natural, indeed entirely inevitable; and the political conditions then existing have deeply impressed themselves on the Prayer Book, and particularly on the Catechism. The society of that period was an autocracy. Certain persons were in authority. Public affairs were their concern. The ordinary mass of mankind had merely to submit and to study to be quiet. It was indeed regarded as a matter of religious concern that rulers should do their duty; and that they shall do this is made, in the Prayer Book, a matter for constant petition. There the political interests of the Book cease. But political conditions have since then entirely changed. The King is now merely the figure-head of the ship of State—though, no doubt, a very valuable and necessary figure-head. The real King, in an effective sense, is a collective one, of whom every citizen is a component member. For this collective King the Prayer Book, dating from before his time, has necessarily no word of petition. The ordinary man—and still more the ordinary woman—is not thought of as possessing any active or positive function in the State. It is his business simply to obey and honour those set over him.

We are always indeed zealously maintaining, in our anxiety to save the situation, that, when the Catechism speaks of 'ordering oneself lowly and reverently to all one's betters,' it means those who are truly all-round better than ourselves. And no doubt it is true that its authors would have held that a humble labourer might be 'better' than a great lord. But there can be no question that they would also have held that there was an enormous presumption—which we should certainly not admit—that a man of high rank would usually be 'better' than his social inferiors. And certainly this point of view is far from having died out in ordinary Church circles. Indeed, too frequently the cash-standard has been frankly taken as the text. I remember how shocked I was, when taking a Sunday-school class in my layman

days, to be told by a boy that 'my betters' means those who are 'better off' and that that was what his day-school teacher told him. Again, I do not think that it is honest to deny a similar implication in the phrase about 'That state of life unto which it shall please God to call me.' It is quite true that the future tense affords us a relief, for which we feel much thanks. The authors of the Catechism would undoubtedly have recognized the possibility of individuals being called to rise to a higher social grade. But such cases would necessarily be very exceptional. And as for the majority, the intention of the phrase unquestionably was that they were to 'know their place'; they were not to thrust themselves into matters too high for them; the great affairs of state were no concern of theirs. The words—however we may, quite justifiably, gloss them—do not, in their original intention, really *mean* merely that a man is to do well the work of his particular calling. We may rightly protest against the continual misquotation 'that state of life into which it *has* pleased God to call me'; but the widespread popular feeling about the clause rests at bottom on a perfectly sound instinct.

In a democratic and increasingly egalitarian age, we find ourselves, in fine, saddled with a Catechism largely shaped by the ideas and feelings of a society, autocratic on the one side, and deferential on the other. It is true that the broader principles and deeper spirit of the Catechism are excellent. It is a national, public-spirited, and social religion which it teaches. The duties of a citizen, *as they were at that period necessarily interpreted*, are strongly enforced. The general impression which is vividly produced on a fair-minded reader is that of a nation righteous throughout in all its social relationships. A most social—not to say socialistic—ideal is upheld in the impartial enforcement on all of the duty 'to learn and labour truly to get mine own living and to do my duty in that state of life, unto which it shall please God to call me'—little as we can be satisfied with the specific interpretation which, as historical considerations make clear, was actually put on the concluding words. Again, the social character of obligation, and the social effects of all sin, are exquisitely

brought out in the little touch whereby it is made part of my duty *to my neighbour* 'to keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity.' We may fairly say then that a Catechism written to-day by the same persons, if they entered as wisely and sympathetically into present needs as they actually did enter into those of their time, would admirably meet the most living aspirations which are stirring in our world. We are justified, therefore, in fastening on the inmost and permanent spirit of the Catechism and reinterpreting its details freely so as to express this spirit effectively in relation to our circumstances, and not to those of the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, the Church as a whole has not been sufficiently alive to the necessity for such reinterpretation. Even men of good-will have often been very much kept back by the subtle influence of the most temporary and relative elements in our authoritative manual of instruction.

This has naturally meant that the Church has been singularly afraid of criticizing—even when circumstances have urgently demanded it—either Governments as such or the socially ascendant classes in general. It cannot be claimed that, at any time during the eighteenth century, nor, except for a very few individual preachers, during the nineteenth, the Church in England has ever raised her voice in the tones in which Isaiah and Ezekiel, for example, rebuke the princes, judges, and other great men of their times. Yet it can hardly be claimed that, during all that time, none of the great and powerful were in need of warning from the spiritual power. Too often, instead of the Church militant, she has shown herself the Church acquiescent here on earth.

Let us take foreign policy, for example. Has England during all that period always been scrupulously just and pacific in her relations to all other nations? Yet never has the voice of the Church been raised in protest. Individual public men have spoken out at particular crises, as John Bright spoke out against the Crimean War. But when has the Church protested? Isaiah could warn his countrymen, in the name of God and as part of his religious preaching, against the disastrous entanglement of the Egyptian alliance; Jeremiah could denounce the revolt

against Babylon. But on what single occasion has the Church of our age and country ever made the smallest demur to any war, whatever its circumstances? It is right indeed that the Church should be patriotic. But true patriotism means caring for the *best* and *highest* interests of one's nation; and the greatest of these is righteousness. Has not the Church, in time of wars or rumours of wars, simply fallen into line, without venturing to examine for herself the ethics of the situation? In such crises she has, as a body, exhibited too little *practical* recognition of any higher law than 'My country, right or wrong.'

Let us take the instance of the Boer War. It is raising no controversial question to say that it cannot possibly be pretended that the issue in that war was, in any kind of way, as plain as that in the present Armageddon. The nation was in fact acutely divided; a large body of serious opinion among our statesmen was opposed, and did not shrink from declaring itself opposed, to the whole war-policy. But this division was in no way reflected in the ranks of what claims to be the national Church. The voice of the official Church was almost solidly behind the Government. The few, who shrank from openly applauding, for the most part remained silent or all but silent. And further, there was a certain shamelessness in the complete endorsement, by the leaders of the Church, of the momentarily dominant political creed. It was surely a gross betrayal of the spirit of prophecy, when, in face of the notorious facts as to the development of the dispute, the Church, in her special war-prayers, told Almighty God so confidently that He had 'suffered us to be at war with those who *have risen up against us.*'

On the wider issue of the discouragement of war in general and the promotion of settled peace throughout the world, the Church may confidently claim to have done something. Various of her individual leaders, very notably Bishop Westcott, have spoken and written finely on the subject. Her official opinion, too, has been expressed in resolutions of the Lambeth Conference. And at any rate on one occasion she has taken an active corporate part in a very definite effort to further the cause of peace. This was the joint campaign, undertaken a few years

ago by the religious bodies in England and Germany, in favour of a permanent Anglo-German understanding. The tragic failure of all such efforts, and the temporary submergence of all the hopes which they represented under a world-wide flood of carnage, should not either lead us to forget their lessons or diminish our gratitude towards their promoters. Further, within quite recent years a Church of England Peace League had been formed and showed promise (which will no doubt be redeemed after the war) of being an active and valuable society. But, when all is said, it remains true that the Church has not normally taken any specially prominent part in the peace movement. The great majority of the leading workers in that campaign have undeniably been persons divorced from orthodox and organized religion. And when the International Congress of the movement was held in London a few years ago, the Church gave it no corporate or official welcome, and very few individuals of any prominence in the Church took part in its proceedings.

Nor in the ordinary teaching of the Church is attention drawn to this subject with at all the frequency that might be desired. And even when it is referred to, in some cases a rather uncertain note is sounded. It is not all Church-teachers who lay down unmistakably that war is a thing which simply ought not to be, and that, to whatever extent war is even possible between Christian nations, to exactly that extent Christendom has failed to be really Christian. Still less has it usually been brought home that it is the duty of Christian people to be doing all that lies in their respective powers to further constant and organized efforts, in ordinary times of quiet, for the setting of international relations on a totally new basis, and for the secure establishment of such recognized methods of deciding controversies between nations as might render war practically impossible. We certainly cannot, as Churchpeople, rest satisfied with the hitherto prevailing attitude of the Church as a whole towards this immensely important department of Christian conduct.

Much the same considerations apply to the Church's witness on intra-imperial questions. It cannot be claimed that, taking the thing broadly, the Church has ordinarily

championed with much boldness the cause of justice, liberty, and humanity within the Empire. Take, for example, the attitude of the Church in South Africa, where she has been, from this point of view, most severely tested. The Church there, as a whole, seems, from all that we hear and read at home, to have yielded far too much before the pressure of the harsher and less sympathetic sort of Imperialism. She has hardly shown, corporately and officially, as much sympathy as might have been hoped with either Boer or Kaffir; nor does she seem even to have made any attempt to champion our hardly used Indian fellow-subjects in Natal. It is only just indeed to allow for the great difficulties of the situation, particularly as regards the native question. The position is necessarily an anxious and perilous one; and the Church does well to shrink from any rash action. But the very danger of the situation calls urgently for an absolutely impartial mediating agency. It is, above all things, the duty of the Church to steady opinion, to shame men out of panic, to lead them on to broader and more far-sighted views, and to permeate them gently and tactfully with greater sympathy for the natives. It is her duty too to enter a firm protest, however calmly and temperately urged, against obvious acts of injustice such as can only provoke the natives to irritation and recklessness. Instead of this, some even among prominent representatives of the Church adopt a tone with regard to the natives which seems scarcely compatible with a real belief that all are 'one in Christ Jesus.' At times they are hardly at sufficient pains to distinguish their attitude sharply from that of those colonists who frankly regard the Kaffir as 'another creation.' Even in actual Church-life, the colour-line has been recognized with a sharpness which shocks the universalism of us home-stayers. Here too, it must be acknowledged, the question is not so simple as it is apt to seem to us; and some measure of separation may be necessary in order to meet native demands, no less than those of the whites. It may be that some things must be acquiesced in, which are incompatible with the full ideals of the Church of Christ; but these should at any rate be confined within the narrowest possible limits,

and particularly should be frankly treated as temporary measures to be transcended as soon as may be. Happily, various articles in *The East and the West*, the quarterly organ of the S.P.G., reveal the existence of another school of wider sympathies in the South African Church, which is striving for a better treatment of these problems.

In some parts of the Empire the Church has come out of the ordeal much better. Notably is this the case in India. Many prominent missionaries and Indian Church-leaders, including bishops and metropolitans, have made most sympathetic pronouncements, in the columns, for instance, of *The East and the West* and at the Pan-Anglican Congress and on other public occasions at home. Their general attitude towards the Indian peoples is indefinitely more sympathetic than that of at least the older and perhaps still dominant school of officials. They have urged that we must freely open to the Indians our education and the full advantages in every respect of our civilization, and that we must not be afraid of the inevitable ulterior results of doing so. They have proclaimed plainly the necessity for introducing the Indians, gradually and continuously, into a very different status within the Empire from that which they now hold. Again, the Church has stood also for the depressed classes as against the pride of caste. In several parts of India, vast numbers of 'untouchables' are being uplifted by the influence of Christianity, are acquiring a new self-respect, and are vindicating for themselves a fresh social position. In fact, in these districts the Gospel is working what amounts to a silent and peaceful social revolution. Altogether, it is perhaps in India that, more than in any other part of the world, the Church is discharging, not altogether inadequately, her social and civic mission. Here she occupies something like her proper position as the spiritual power, counterbalancing and holding in check the, always potentially godless, world-power.

But, after all, it is home affairs which call for the fullest and most detailed consideration. If the Church, where she has been in possession for centuries and where she has the greatest resources at her command, cannot help the nation to set its own house in order, she is not likely to accomplish much in the vast theatre of world-politics.

We have already seen what, until quite the closing years of the nineteenth century, was the almost universal attitude of Churchmen in this matter, and until yesterday was still the prevailing attitude of the Church as a body. It was natural to say—because, so far as it went, it was perfectly true—‘We are concerned with the saving of souls; we do not believe in political and economic remedies for what are at bottom spiritual evils; a man can be a Christian under any form of government and within any social system; on the other hand, make all men real Christians, and these evils of society will disappear.’ It was plausible to conclude, as did the accepted apologia of the official Church, ‘Convert people to Christ, all the rest will follow.’ That, too, was true, if rightly understood; but only if ‘conversion to Christ’ were made to include far more than such apologists themselves contemplated. This whole line of defence really ignored the actual point at issue.

It is actually a question as to the scope of Christian duty. Those who have used this kind of language have been thinking, when they spoke of conversion to Christ or loyalty to one’s Christian calling, only of the most strictly private and personal aspects of a man’s conduct, ignoring altogether his duty in regard to the social order itself. But the fact is that the structure of society existing in any given age is deeply stamped with a certain ethical character. And since the lives of the individual members of society have to be lived within the particular set of relationships involved in that social structure, the measure of moral achievement open to them is profoundly conditioned, and may be most narrowly limited, by these.

Thus, it can hardly be seriously maintained that the horrors and enforced indecencies of life in the slums do not inevitably debase the majority of those who are exposed to them. On the other hand, such conditions of life among the wealthy as those disclosed in Mr. Arthur Ponsonby’s striking book, *The Camel and the Needle’s Eye*, must be equally unfavourable to the development of a really Christian type of character. But still more serious, as affecting much larger numbers of persons, is the type of moral relationships which often subsist between man and man in our present society. Let us consider for instance what ‘competition’ means in the shape in which

it at present obtains, and even forms a root-principle of our social economy. If we take two wage-earners out of work and competing for a single job, this means a struggle of man against man, in which the victor necessarily deprives his rival of all means of livelihood. And the same may be true of two men in business of some kind, competing against each other, in order, if it may be, to capture the whole trade. Judging such action as a social phenomenon, and not as the personal conduct of the individuals concerned, we are bound to maintain that it is an appallingly anti-Christian proceeding. And yet people to-day are compelled to act thus, in some cases by the very duty they owe to their wives and families. It is no question then of mere exposure to severe temptations to act in an unchristian way; the point is that, even when a man is doing the very best of which the system admits, he is often living according to methods essentially incompatible with the Christian ideal. By doing what is right *relatively to the circumstances*, he may indeed prove himself to be at heart a completely loyal Christian. But even so the Christian ideal remains unrealized. For that is essentially a communal ideal, and can only be realized in a society which, *as such*, is living in a Christian way.

There is of course always the danger of exaggerating the importance of material conditions. Any tendency to substitute reform in these for a change of heart must be strenuously resisted by Christians. But the considerations at which we have been glancing suffice to show that the religious life is most profoundly conditioned in its manifestation by such things as economic arrangements, and that it is fatal to ignore their influence.

And further, there arises the question of the responsibility for the established arrangements of society. If this is thoroughly sifted, it will be found that, at bottom, these things are much more directly matters of right-doing or wrong-doing than is often realized. Our accepted social methods, with the evils which they involve, are the conduct of society in the mass; somehow human beings must be, in the last resort, actually responsible, in a moral and religious sense, for these evils. The social system of the day is necessarily the expression of certain

aspects of the character and principles of the people as a whole; though, for various reasons, not necessarily those aspects which are most influential over the more private conduct of the great majority.

In the face of this corporate kind of sin we peculiarly feel the truth that we wrestle, not merely against flesh and blood, but 'against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.' The individual concrete embodiment, in flesh and blood, of human nature does not often appear so very evil. The totality of the personal character of any average human being, his quite sincerely professed ideals, are enormously far from being base enough to account for the hideous and widespread evils which stain our society. What we have to fight against is certain subtle and intangible evil spirits, of sloth, of greed, of self-seeking, of Mammon-worship, and so forth, which have, in large measure, seized upon our common life. They first gain a footing in individual souls, through the weak spots of characters which on the whole are sound and admirable, or at least respectable. Then they are able to get the collective life of the body firmly in their grip, and manifest themselves on the social plane in an intensified power which sometimes shocks us by its veritable devilishness. One need only instance the White Slave Traffic—an evil with which the majority of thoroughly well-intentioned persons seem so little able to grapple with real success.

The flaws in individuals by which the pass is betrayed take, in many cases, the shape of a slightly excessive addiction to ease and pleasure or to material wealth or to worldly success and the applause of one's fellows or to some other of the lower goods of life. Often again the defect consists merely in apathy and slothful acquiescence in things as they are, or an excessively temporizing spirit and an overreadiness to accept compromises.

Thus the responsibility for social evils seems, at first sight, to hang somewhat vaguely in the air. But the truth is that we are all responsible for everything. That is a fundamental principle of Christian ethics, which must be thoroughly grasped and heartily accepted by religious

people at large, if we are ever to have a really Christian society. It is true of course that some are more directly responsible than others for certain things. But in most cases it is very difficult to assign with certainty the various degrees ; and in the case of very few of the sort of evils which we have been noticing can anything like the full responsibility be brought home directly to any assignable individuals. Each of us must recognize his own responsibility ; and then seek, by the grace of God, both to purge his own heart from evil, and, in co-operation with his fellows, to re-order in the interests of righteousness the affairs of the world so far as he has any measure of control over them. And here it is important to remember that, in our age and country, we all possess an unusual amount of power to remould the public life of the nation. We are all of us the ultimate makers of all the laws of the land, and also the ultimate administrators, through local governing bodies, of those laws. Further, we enjoy a quite exceptional freedom of association for all kinds of purposes. And such voluntary organizations are allowed quite unusual liberty in their operations. As members of Trade Unions or Federations of Employers, or of Co-operative Societies, Councils of Public Welfare, and many other forms of social grouping, we have immense scope for the application of Christian principles to public life.¹

But such corporate hope can only spring out of corporate repentance ; and corporate repentance must be founded on a firm grasping of the idea of corporate sin. Such repentance is no mere piling up of a number of individual repentances, as these have been commonly understood. Every person in the nation might ' repent ' wholeheartedly, in reference to those private and personal aspects of conduct to which evangelistic efforts have usually been solely directed. But we should not then have made even a beginning of corporate repentance. It is individuals who must repent ; but they must repent, and must earnestly purpose amendment, not only in regard to their own personal sins, but also as to those collective sins of society

¹ In the above I have drawn freely upon a sermon of mine, treating of corporate sin, which will be found printed, under the title ' Society and its Seven Devils,' in *The Commonwealth* of July, 1915.

in the guilt of which they personally share, but which are not the actual sins of any particular individuals. It is in the light of these truths that we must interpret 'conversion to Christ.' The actual effects of an alleged conversion, however sincere and however deep, will vary enormously according to the converted person's conception of the character and requirements of Christ. As evangelistic work has usually been conducted, these have been confined to a very narrow and individualistic sphere. Nor can any conversion be relied on to banish from a man's life any particular form of sin, unless in the preaching which has led up to the conversion this has been plainly denounced as sin. All experience proves this. We may instance the evangelist, John Newton, driving a roaring trade in human flesh across the Atlantic. At a later date we have cotton-masters, adherents of evangelicalism, and, according to their lights, quite sincerely pious, in the early days in Lancashire, making 'thousands per cent' by sweating little children of four or five. Nor are more or less similar, though less flagrant, cases wanting at the present day. The whole methods of our evangelistic work therefore require to be made much broader and more virile, if it is to become really effective.

But an honest failure to understand this necessity is certainly at times reinforced by ecclesiastical cowardice. Thus at the time of the great coal strike, the *Guardian*—which claims to be '*the Church newspaper*,'—uttered the naïve confession that the Church 'had little to gain' by interfering in these economic matters. So, the prophetic Church, the organized and authoritative mouthpiece on earth of the God of eternal and unswerving justice, is to sit aloof, whatever wrongs are rampant among men and whatever quarrels are rending them apart, until she is convinced that she has 'something to gain' by intervening!

This incident is typical of what has too largely been the attitude of the Church. But it is only just to recognize the very great difficulties of her position. A great and old-established institution, such as the Christian Church, necessarily becomes, even apart from the accident of Establishment in any particular country, an integral part of an historically developed social system. Its whole roots are sunk deeply in the very fibre and tissue of the

system ; its whole working is implicated with, and dependent at every turn on, that of various organs and departments of the society. It is in the utmost degree difficult to disentangle the two. Indeed at certain epochs, as in the Roman Empire after the time of Constantine or in this country under the Tudors, it has been absolutely impossible for the Church to utter any condemnation of the fundamental structure of the existing order. At such times she undoubtedly had to acquiesce in this, at least as a *pis aller* ; and was right and wise in not rebelling. The best she could do was to work for the justest and most humane administration of the system ; or, at the most, to plead cautiously for the carrying out by authority from above of some detailed improvements in the established institutions.

In our time, a much more constructive attitude is possible for the Church, and is imperatively called for. But she is very slow to recognize either the opportunity or the call. She is still bound by manifold and powerful ties to the established order. Every drastic change that is advocated arouses difficult questions as to how the indispensable conditions for her effective functioning are to be secured in a new environment. She ought, no doubt, to have such a measure of prophetic insight as to be sure that some way can be found of reconciling all her own rightful claims with any change which may really be required in the interests of justice or of the true welfare of the people ; and set herself diligently to be always seeking such a way in every period of social or political unrest.

We must not, therefore, expect too much of the actual Church taken as a whole. And her difficulties are increased by the fact that she really is bound to be, in a very important sense, conservative. She has to stand firm, that is, for that sane, central, balanced view of life which is represented by the Christian Faith ; she has to defend the fundamental sanities and sanctities of life. And these are always embodied in, and more or less successfully protected by, the great social institutions of any given age. These may provide a very imperfect casing for such sanities and sanctities. The incarnation may be so inadequate as seriously to distort and taint the principle

that is incarnated. But those who care for the principle cannot rashly destroy the institution, until they see their way very clearly towards something to take its place. Thus it cannot be doubted, for example, that those ideals of marriage and the family which the Church is committed to defend have become very closely bound up with the existing methods of property holding. That does not mean of course that the two are for ever tied together. But it does mean that they need most careful disentangling, if the present rights of property are to be drastically challenged. The Church is, therefore, under a stringent obligation to proceed very cautiously in such matters. The complete carrying out for example of any programme like that of crude Marxian Socialism, or that of such detached intellectuals as Mr. Bernard Shaw, would be a disaster from the Christian standpoint. It would ruthlessly destroy many of the finer and more delicate fruits of human life, and force mankind into an intolerable strait-waistcoat, designed on the basis of an eminently unspiritual view of the universe. Such revolutionary proposals must be thrown back, until they have been thoroughly criticized and re-expressed. Of course, a perfect Church would likewise instantly detect the basis of justice, from which the revolutionary demand derives such power as it possesses; and would insist that men should find some sane and Christian way of fully meeting this demand, and take occasion from the spectre of revolution to warn them of the possible dangers of an obstinate conservatism.

But the Church's attitude of caution is constantly further intensified by really unworthy fears as to her mere material interests. In part, the Church dreads anything like a revolutionary change in society, however peaceful and gradual, owing to its ultimate implications as to her own endowments. But still more is she held back by the fear of losing the support of some of those rich people on whose contributions she is dependent. The Church of England in particular is still (in spite of the formidable competition of the Church of Rome) on the whole the Church of the rich in this country—or at least of so many of them as still have anything to do with religion. Now

it is not open to doubt that, if any Bishop continually made it clear that his attitude was that so boldly expressed in many of the utterances, for example, of Bishop Gore, his diocesan funds would fall off by tens of thousands a year. Indeed, it is notorious that that prelate actually has severely felt such difficulties in his diocese. The Church must choose; it is a clear case of God or Mammon. A Church which had been compelled, as a consequence of the very faithfulness of her prophetic witness, to cut down to the barest minimum her plant and organization, would, in the end, produce a deep and lasting effect.

But her path is difficult in any case. At every turn genuinely Christian considerations mingle with worldly motives in holding her back. There is a sound instinct, for example (though it is not always quite happily expressed), at the bottom of the fear of 'taking sides.' She is meant to be the Church of all men, of the rich as much as of the poor. She is to be above all 'respect of persons.' She is to sit enthroned above all strifes of parties, of classes, of sexes, of nations, and is to judge impartially, without fear or favour. If she is confronted with the proclamation of a naked and unrelieved class-war, framed in the bald terms dear to the more truculent sort of Socialists, she cannot, without reserve, pledge herself to one side, even if, on the main issues, this is, broadly speaking, the side of justice. She must stand for perfect fairness to all. She can no more be expected to cry 'Labour, right or wrong,' than 'My country, right or wrong.'

In particular, must she feel, if she is true to 'the mind of Christ,' that there is an imperative duty of being careful not to bear false witness against one's neighbour. Rightly are we, as Christians, very much afraid of 'judging' individuals; rightly do we feel the obligation to exercise a certain 'moderation,' or sweet reasonableness in our language. And here certainly we do come to a point where we cannot follow, without criticism, the example of the Hebrew prophets. No man of good sense or right feeling would like to hear a Christian priest attack the fashionable ladies of the West End in quite the same language that Amos applies to the ladies of Samaria. That is not to deny the true inspiration of Amos, or even that

he was inspired in the very outburst which rather shocks us, when we judge it as we would any contemporary utterance. Inspiration, as we have seen, takes the form of a general stirring of the prophet's soul by the Holy Spirit; any intuition which is the direct gift to him of the inspiring Spirit enters his soul in a confused and implicit form. The actual words in which he utters it are his own; they may even bear considerable traces of all-too human passion and infirmity. Even when we come to the New Testament, we must still remember the limits of the writers' inspiration. We know that they had not, and could not have, acquired completely the 'mind of Christ.' We may well feel that we could hardly justify fully every word that St. James uses towards the rich. Such language is not strictly paralleled by even the strongest of our Lord's own utterances. And, with regard to these, so terrible are they that it may well be doubted whether similar expressions could ever be safely used by any one of less exalted spiritual insight.

It is true that there is no form of economic oppression, denounced in the Old Testament, which could not be fairly closely paralleled in our own society. But for the most part—as we have already seen—there is a difference. Our own rich are, as a rule, very far from being guilty of any literal extortion. There is no question in their case of direct and unashamed spoliation, as in the case of the rich men denounced by Amos. The latter must have been either conscious wrong-doers or at least guilty of what any decent person might know to be wrong and what was clearly forbidden by traditional laws commonly recognized in the community. It is only a small minority of our money-makers who are presumptuous sinners of this kind. For the most part the riches of the possessing class come to them by the automatic working of the accepted economic system—accepted, let us remember, by the conscience of the majority in all classes of the community. They abide within the limits, not only of legality, but of the generally received ethical standard. Most of them are as kindly and well-meaning as any average person in any social rank. It is by no means such an easy thing to see that a social order, taken for granted by successive generations, is radically tainted with injus-

tice. When our own comfort and social prestige are bound up with the system, it becomes more difficult still. It is not that the rich are peculiarly wicked people not to see the wrongness of the present economic régime; on the contrary, if they are to see this, they must needs be of exceptional character or insight. It is quite true that these people's riches are produced by social arrangements which involve gross injustice and oppression. But to denounce them as personally robbers would be as absurd as it would be unjust.

As a general rule, we need to attack systems and not persons. The present system of property cannot be defended in anything like its entirety; but we cannot condemn any individual merely for exercising the rights which our present laws and social customs assign to the holders of certain forms of property. Such a man is caught helplessly in the system, just as much as any of us. But such a person is, judged by the highest standard, to be condemned—like any other citizen of whatever social class—if he does not acknowledge the wrongness of such social methods, and seek earnestly to find some practical way of radically changing them, and if he is not eager to support any well-considered scheme for that end, whatever its effects on his own pocket or social position. But we must bear in mind that, as we have seen, the opposition to reform, characteristic of so many of those in comfortable positions, is chiefly due to that element of thoughtlessness and lack of imagination in human nature, to which we must all plead guilty; and to the natural disinclination to take much trouble, except when either necessity or some absorbing interest drives us. In dealing with such failings we need to be very tender and considerate in our methods. We need patience and sympathy; and must persist in repeating good-humouredly the same painstaking explanations again and again.

But the Church does need to be constantly pointing out, with far more boldness than she has generally shown, the inherent wrongness of some of our present institutions. The faithful should never be allowed to lose sight of such obvious facts as the correlativity of the slums of London and the unearned incomes of the London ground-landlords. And now and then some special opportunity occurs for

pointing a moral. A magnificent chance was lost by the Church at the time of the Louis XIV 'charity' ball at the Albert Hall a few years back. The gross extravagance and the ostentatious luxury of the fête, the selection, for imitation, of a period so peculiarly frivolous and heartless as the *ancien régime* in France, above all, the horrible degradation of the word 'charity' in connexion with such riotous living—what a subject for stern condemnation by the Bishop of the diocese and by the pulpits of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's! And what material for a Hebrew prophet! The grim and unconscious irony of it all—the pride and luxury of the court of Louis XIV; and, a few generations later, the whole régime going down in fire in the Revolution—and our upper classes deliberately taking that doomed society as their model!

Further, we can at least demand, in a tone of far more stringent authority, that individuals shall act in a Christian way up to the very limit of which existing social relationships admit. When, even relatively to the system, a man is a bad landlord or a bad employer, then he is to be roundly condemned in plain language. But how little daring has the modern Church commonly shown, even in the most flagrant cases! There is no more horrible story in the whole history of economic oppression than the record of the deliberate depopulation of the Scottish Highlands by the great landlords. Yet throughout the whole process the Church never once lifted her voice in protest. But in what single respect did these Highland landowners differ from those on whom Isaiah invoked the woe for 'laying field to field, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth'? And, while the great expropriations took place in the early part of the nineteenth century, the encroachments of the deer-forests have continued from time to time down to the present day; indeed, on at least one notorious estate there have been similar evictions even since the war. It is true that, in recent years, they have been carried out in a more considerate manner and some care has been taken for the future of the expropriated crofters. But, if a man wishes to live his life in his own way on his ancestral 'portion,' why should another man, simply because he is a landowner, be entitled to banish him to Canada? It is no

answer, on the score of justice, to say that he will earn a larger income there. Clearly, Isaiah would have rejected with contempt any such excuse.

Or let us take another instance. At the time of the great coal-strike, economic experts, such as Professor Jevons, writing in the public press, stated that in many cases colliers were done out of special allowances, for particular kinds of work, which they had been deliberately encouraged to expect. When such things are alleged to be going on in industry, the Church should proclaim aloud that they are an abomination in the sight of God and not for a moment to be tolerated on the part of Christian people. As to the direct condemnation of individuals, that is a more difficult matter. The facts are nearly always disputed, and it is not usually easy to arrive at the truth. Even when something which wears a very ugly look is indisputably established, the merits of the case cannot always be judged till we know all the circumstances. When these are known, it will sometimes be found that the guilt lies with the system, and not, in any special way, with the individual. However, nothing could justify such a practice as that just referred to; in similar cases, undisputed facts may by themselves constitute an act of wrong-doing, such as no accompanying circumstances could excuse.

The fact is that the Church, as a rule, has been far too lax as to the methods by which money is *made*, so long as it is *spent* in an ostensibly Christian way. The Church ought to be far more careful, when accepting donations from the rich, in examining the sources from which they are derived. She ought to refuse the money of landlords who take no trouble to see that houses on their property are not used for evil purposes. And it is difficult to see how she can receive any money derived from the liquor traffic; for, in the actual conditions with regard to national sobriety, it is obvious that any considerable profits made in this business must be, in large part, the price of drunkenness. Again, more than one American millionaire, execrated by the whole Labour movement as an oppressor of the workers and a grinder of the faces of the poor, has, within recent years, given organs or electric-lighting instalments to churches and cathedrals in this country. It ought to be plainly laid down once for all that deliberate

Trade Union-smashing is a deadly sin. The Church is of course not bound by the judgment of the Labour movement; but, if a would-be donor lies under the accusation of organised Labour for this offence, he ought to be required to clear himself before an ecclesiastical court of inquiry, and, till he has done so, all his gifts should be sternly refused.

A strong line on these issues is a matter of urgency. Professor Kirsopp Lake has recently uttered a grave warning in this connexion. 'The parallelism between the present position of Socialism with its allied methods of thought, and early Christianity is extraordinary and very disquieting. In both cases you have a body of men asserting in a perhaps somewhat irritating manner their aloofness from the established order of society; in both cases you have a body of men prophesying that society is doomed to come down with a crash and that a New Age is at hand which they and the outcasts of the existing system will inherit; in both cases you find this body of men attacked as irreligious, unpatriotic, and deluded. That is the parallelism. How much farther will it go? The future is unknown to us, but we can sometimes use the past as a mirror in which to study its advance. In the days of the Roman Empire the crash did come and a new age did dawn, but it was not the sort of new age which the Christians had foreseen. It was instead the Dark Ages; and this was partly because there was an element of truth in the accusations brought against the Christians, that they were neglecting things essential to the welfare of organised society, and partly because the intellectual and cultured classes of that day lacked the faith and courage to lead the way to a new world, but kept turning regretful backward glances to the old order which was passing away. The New Age was dark because it lacked the prestige, power, and tradition of government which the richer classes of the Empire had possessed, and its leadership passed to the Christian Church because, although it lacked these things, it had a clearer vision of a higher life and the faith to follow its guidance through the darkness.'¹

Professor Lake, it is true, exaggerates somewhat as to the views of the Early Church. Many of her leaders did display a much broader and more statesmanlike attitude

¹ Lake, *The Stewardship of Faith*, pp. 177, 178.

than he allows. Still, it remains true that, from whatever causes, there was this divorce between her as a body and the culture of the age. In any case, this point does not affect the warning for our time. And in the present crisis, it is peculiarly the business of the Church of God to break the sharp edges of class-antagonism on either side, to mediate between the old and the new, and, above all, to enlist on the side of the new order as many as may be of 'the intellectual and cultured classes' (whose ear she can gain, as the Labour movement can never hope to do) with their 'prestige, power, and tradition of government.' If the Church fails here, there is no other power which can effectively intervene and the prospect is dark indeed.

But, if she is to discharge aright her function as a social interpreter, the Church needs to have drunk deeply of the prophetic spirit. She is under severe temptations to ignore the most vital points. If she follows the line of least resistance, she is bound to concentrate on mere material improvement, on a mere cleaning-up of the incidental mess and squalor of our perverted civilization. Without much difficulty slums can be abolished (sooner or later), a living wage secured, casual labour eliminated, unemployment reduced to a minimum, and all the unemployed covered by insurance. But all this need not produce, more than temporarily, any juster distribution of wealth. Before many years are over the cost may be more than made up to the possessing class by the increased efficiency of the workers; there would be no guarantee whatever that the whole future increment of the national industry may not pass into the hands of the former. Still less need such improvements affect the pride of place of these or diminish by one iota their dominance, in every department of life, over the masses. Too much of the widespread interest in Social Reform, shown by Church-people in recent years, has followed these temporizing and materialistic lines; questions of fundamental justice have been avoided to the utmost. That is not the way of the prophets; we need to pursue, like them, the great flaming ideals of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. We must be always exalting spiritual ends above material.

Above all do we need a passion for *emancipation*. 'To undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free,

and that ye break every yoke' is ever the prophetic demand. Applied to present conditions, this must mean the eventual complete abolition of the wage-relation, with its frank treatment of such a divinely creative energy as human labour-power as a mere *thing*, to be bought and sold, like a table or a pair of boots, *for what it will fetch* in a *competitive* market. So cautious and trusted a leader as Bishop Westcott bore unhesitating testimony that the wage-relation is not one that is compatible with the true ideal of life.¹ Pending its ultimate extinction, we must meanwhile strive peculiarly for such reforms as directly tend towards this goal. Bournevilles and Port Sunlights, bonuses and profit-sharing, would be a poor compensation for the loss of liberty. If we are not careful, our Social Reform may easily issue in something unpleasantly near that Servile State against which Mr. Belloc is always warning us; it may yet give us a nation of beautifully washed, well-fed, and contented slaves.

There are very grave menaces to liberty in the bureaucratic measures adopted for the purpose of winning the present war—measures which play dangerously into the hands of those less sympathetic employers who are always striving to wrest back from Labour such liberties as it has won, and to re-establish more firmly than ever their weakening hold over the lives of the workers. A great extension of such measures is likely to be demanded after the declaration of peace, in the interests of the economic war which so many of our citizens are now taking for granted as the inevitable sequel. This demand will be closely coupled with appeals to the hearts and consciences of religious people, to whom these measures will be commended as greatly ameliorating the lot of the poor. If the Churches are too anxious merely to 'get something done,' they will fall into the trap. But if they are true to their prophetic office, they will refuse to regard the poor as people who, to the end of the chapter, must simply be treated kindly and improved from above. They will recognise that one of the most necessary elements in the desirable life is a reasonable measure of freedom to order one's life for oneself, and particularly of control over the actual conditions of one's labour in one's daily occupation.

¹ Cf. Westcott, *Socialism*, C.S.U. Pamphlet, No. 3.

And so, in particular, they will very heartily recognize the supreme importance of Trade Unions to a thoroughly healthy life of society. They will earnestly desire that these may extend and flourish, and they will be most jealous for the safeguarding of all reasonable liberties for them. They need not, of course, approve of all the methods which any Trade Unionists adopt; they may criticize most carefully in detail all particular claims made by the Unions, either for any given section of workers, or for Labour as a whole. But they will heartily endorse the general principle of Unionism, and will be most anxious to see the Unions wisely guided and inspired by the highest ideals. For they will recognize that, as Bishop Gore finely insisted at a recent Church Congress, a strong Trade Unionism is the best guarantee we can have against the dangers of bureaucracy. It is becoming increasingly clear that the most vital issue, in social matters, in the near future will be that of the *control* of industry. And it is also already evident that no solution can possibly be satisfactory which does not give a considerable share of the control to the workers' organization in any given industry. This is every bit as necessary when a particular business is nationalized as when it remains under the régime of private enterprise.

And beyond these considerations, there are special reasons why, as Churchpeople, we should feel a keenly sympathetic interest in Trade Unionism. The whole position of the Church, as a voluntary group within the State, requires the deepest consideration in these difficult times. It is of vital importance that she should vindicate her due liberty of action and secure all the conditions necessary to her fully effective functioning. In particular she must, whether established or not, claim from the State the recognition of her corporate personality, as has been so finely explained by Dr. Figgis in his *Churches in the Modern State*. Now, these claims raise the whole issue of the status of voluntary groups of all kinds within the State. Among these, associations of the producers in the several industries are a particularly natural development. Hence it is not surprising that thinkers like the present Master of Balliol and Dr. Figgis, interested primarily in the question of the rightful status of the Church and devoting much specialist study and reflection to this,

have been led on to correlate this question closely with that of Trade Unionism. They have developed a hearty sympathy with the higher aspirations of the Unions, and have shown themselves particularly attracted by the idea, now so widely entertained, of possible Guilds of some new type, arising in the future out of the present Trade Unions. At any rate, Churchmen can least of all people desire to see a highly centralized State becoming more and more dominant over every aspect of life and leaving no other form of association, with any effectively guaranteed autonomy or inherent rights, between itself and the individual citizen. And they of all people ought to be open to see how eminently desirable it is, in the interests of the welfare, in the widest sense, of the nation, that the State of the future should develop in the group-form. The Christian life is essentially social; it involves that the individual shall live along with, and mingle in the full stream of, the life of the community. But the community cannot be adequately represented to us by the State alone; the idea of it is best realized through various overlapping forms of association. In the multiplication of such groups lies the safeguard of due liberty and of a desirable measure of variety and free-play in life.

Further, in regard to such collective efforts as are certainly inevitable, for the building up of a national minimum standard of life for all, the more such measures are carried out through the agency of the workers' own organizations—Friendly Societies, Co-operative Societies, but above all the Trade Unions—the better for all concerned. As little as possible should such activities be entrusted, either to government officials, or to persons of higher social rank, however kindly and well-intentioned, acting as voluntary workers under public authorities. Of course, if we really regard a well-drilled and efficient populace as, in itself, the highest product of Christian civilization, we had better concentrate on producing it; perhaps the task would not prove a very difficult one. But this is, to say the very least, a most inadequate ideal; and, further, the laying of excessive stress on these more disciplinary sides of life is distinctly dangerous to some of the higher and finer aspects of human life.

V

SIGNS OF THE DAWN

SO far we have been considering chiefly the failures of the Church in her prophetic office. But in fairness, it must be remembered that, side by side with these, voices of a very different quality have also, from time to time, issued from the Church. In the blackest period of all, at the dawn of the nineteenth century, we have the great figure of Wilberforce. It is needless to recount how nobly he laboured to root out the scandal of negro slavery. But, beyond that, he fought also for various social reforms at home. All along the line he was an enthusiast for justice and emancipation, and he was but the leading figure of a group of Evangelicals, all devoted to the same causes. Still, the mass of the Church, and of his fellow-Evangelicals, were either indifferent or, in many cases, actively hostile. And the same experience befell his successor, Lord Shaftesbury, who fought so splendidly for the Factory Acts, the foundation-stone of working-class emancipation in this country.

However, the great glory of the nineteenth-century Church of England was the work of Frederick Denison Maurice and his group of 'Christian Socialists,' of whom Charles Kingsley was perhaps the chief. It is difficult to exaggerate the influence of Maurice on both the theology and the practical life of the Church of England. His ideals have exercised a silent, permeating influence which has affected many in every school of thought within the Church. He was deeply imbued with the spirit of the prophets; he quickened the dry bones of the accepted theology, and deepened incalculably the treatment of their problems by contemporary theologians. Also, he laboured manfully, though for the most part not very successfully, for years at the practical task of social reconstruction, more particularly in the founding of Co-operative Societies. The 'Christian Socialism' of his day may fairly be said

to have fallen into the ground and died ; but, precisely by doing so, it has brought forth, and is still to-day bringing forth, much fruit. From it derives, in this country, the whole of that complex mass of tendencies and activities which is conveniently called, in a broad sense of words, 'Christian Socialism.' The inmost spirit of these pioneers uttered itself in Charles Kingsley's sturdy declaration from a London pulpit: 'The business for which God sends a Christian priest in a Christian nation is to preach and practise Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity in the fullest, deepest, widest meaning of those three great words. In so far as he does, he is a true priest, doing the Lord's work with the Lord's blessing upon him. In so far as he does not, he is no priest at all, but a traitor to God and man.'

Meanwhile a remarkable offshoot had been thrown out by the Oxford Movement. A number of its disciples of the second generation, known popularly as 'the Ritualists,' had gone slumming, as parish priests in London and the great industrial centres, with almost incredible zeal and devotion. In this sphere they found themselves up against the social problem in its acutest form. They acquired an intense fellow-feeling for the poor, and by degrees an increasing open-mindedness as to social reform, and an inclination to sympathize with democratic and progressive movements. This spirit showed its full flower and fruit in the heroic and lovable figures of Fathers Dolling and Stanton.

This course of experience had prepared many of the younger school of 'Ritualists' for a receptiveness to the Maurician ideas. A curious mingling of the two streams took place. Out of this arose a remarkable group, of whom the most active spirit was the Rev. Stewart Headlam, so well known for his years of splendid work, especially in connection with education, on the London County Council. These formed a society known as 'the Guild of St. Matthew.' This declared itself a Socialist Society, but its Socialism was never very clearly defined, and the political views of some of its older members were difficult to distinguish from those of ordinary Radicalism. It was always a small and somewhat eccentric group; and it

had a way of taking up all sorts of haphazard cries and making them an integral part of its propaganda. Thus, at an early stage of its career, it pledged itself definitely to the policy of Secular Schools. However its main efforts, so far as these were concerned with economic matters, were concentrated on the land question, and it advocated strenuously Henry George's programme of the single tax. Some of its members took a leading part in founding the Land Restoration League, from which is lineally descended the present League for the Taxation of Land Values. And with this League, under its successive names, the Guild continued to work in close concert. In spite of its earnestness and courage, the Guild never exercised much influence on the Church as a whole; and, after a stormy career of some thirty years, it finally died out in obscurity.

However, there were other followers of Maurice, more in touch with the central stream of Church-life and some of them occupying more influential positions in the Church. Of these the most prominent was the noble and saintly Bishop Westcott. A group of these men founded the Christian Social Union ('C.S.U.') at a time when London had been successively stirred by the great unemployed agitation of 1886 and 1887 and the Dock Strike of 1889. The principles of this Union are: '(i) To claim for the Christian law the ultimate authority to rule social practice; (ii) To study in common how to apply the moral truths and principles of Christianity to the social and economic difficulties of the present time; (iii) To present Christ in practical life as the living Master and King, the enemy of wrong and selfishness, the power of righteousness and love.' Its principal method of working is well described by the second clause; it has always avowedly existed chiefly for the *study* of social questions in the light of the Christian law. But it will be seen that its official formularies leave it altogether open, *what* the Christian law has to say about present-day conditions. There are wide diversities of standpoint among its members; but the attitude of its most notable leaders, such as Bishop Gore and Canon Scott Holland, is eminently stalwart and thorough-going.

In 1906 some ardent spirits, dissatisfied with the C.S.U.,

founded the Church Socialist League. In revolt against the vagueness of the Union, these pioneers rushed to the opposite extreme and fell into the mistake of concentrating on the advocacy of a clear-cut programme of the socialization of the means of production. By degrees, however, their experience of work on these lines taught the leading members of the League their error. Of late they have been more and more dropping programmes and concentrating on principles. The somewhat rigid definition of Socialism which stands in the League's basis is now undergoing revision. Meanwhile it is in practice interpreted with much latitude, and the ideal of the leaders is far removed from the complete collectivism which the formulary might be likely to suggest to most outsiders. What the League unitedly does insist on is that the social order must be, as rapidly as possible, reconstructed on thoroughly Christian lines. This is held to involve that all must enjoy full and genuine equality of consideration—that is, all *equally* be treated as really ends in themselves—together with reasonable liberty in the ordering of their personal lives, and some real control over the conditions of their work; that all individual or class-monopoly of the root-sources of wealth must be abolished, and a general co-operative ordering of the economic life of society as a whole established. The League is little concerned with any particular economic scheme. It has indeed a strong conviction that the application of the Christian Faith to social conditions would in fact mean something that might fairly be called Socialism, or some régime uncommonly like it; but all it demands is that the Faith shall be, genuinely and thoroughly, so applied. It follows that Church Socialists, as such, are not primarily interested in any kind of political or industrial action designed to bring about the desired social change. The League works to effect, through the power of the Christian Faith, the change of heart in the nation at large which it regards as at once the indispensable basis and the sufficient guarantee of the outward reconstruction. It is a religious, not a political society; and is not committed to the support of any particular party. The state of opinion at present prevailing in the League may be best judged

from its recently issued syllabus on *Christianity and Socialism*.¹

Apart from these organized bodies, various individual Churchmen, impelled precisely by their faith as such, have in recent times taken a prominent part in the task of social amelioration. Among these the late Frederick Rogers is perhaps worthy of special mention for his strenuous labours, through many years, devoted to the securing of old-age pensions.

Meantime, on the fringes, as one may say, of the Church other voices had been heard in which, in greater or less degree, the true prophetic ring was recognizable. Thus Thomas Carlyle, though far from professing the Christian Faith, certainly stood, in some respects, in the succession of the Hebrew prophets. His whole career was governed by an intense belief in a God who really governs the world, and He a God of righteousness, even though, to the Christian, Carlyle's conception of righteousness must seem sadly inadequate. On the whole, Carlyle's God was very much like the Jehovah of a large part of the Old Testament. From that volume indeed he directly derived much of his inspiration. And the very tone of the old prophets—their fiery impetuosity, their certainty of having God behind them, their commanding note of authority—was reproduced in him. In such a spirit, he bore unflinching witness against all that was sordid, mean, and covetous in the life of the day, displaying an intolerant hatred of nineteenth-century Manchester and all its works.

Nearer to the position of the Church stood John Ruskin. For, though he had latterly little dealings with organized Christianity, he based himself largely on the New Testament. His antipathies were exactly the same as those of Carlyle, and, up to a point, his positive ideals were similar. But there was in him a much greater element of sweetness and kindness. His spirit may perhaps be best estimated from his *Unto this Last*.

With these two great names, it is impossible not to associate also that of William Morris. He, too, had an ample measure of the prophetic tone and vision, as evi-

¹ Obtainable from the League office, 11C, Featherstone Buildings, High Holborn, W.C.1. Price 3d.

denced particularly in his *Dream of John Ball*. And though he was very far indeed from accepting Christian theology, he had great sympathy with certain sides of the Church's view of life. His whole indictment of nineteenth-century commercialism was inspired by an intense love for the life of the Middle Ages—permeated throughout, as it was, by the ideas of Catholicism.

Hence the work of all these three has some bearing on our subject. Though they stood outside the Church, in the strict sense of the term, yet they belong to the prophetic movement, the main stream of which has lain within the Judaic and Christian Churches. They all prophesied, too, from the basis of some portion or aspect of the Church's Faith. Their work kept in close contact with at least the frontiers of the Church; and on this account it exercised great influence—perhaps its greatest influence—within that body.

Owing to this diffusive working of a new social spirit, and partly also, it may be, to the activities of those specialist organizations which have been described above, a very marked change has come over the average tone of the teaching Church and particularly of its official leaders. A few Bishops and dignitaries, it is true, still from time to time give vent to truly appalling sentiments in regard to social movements and working-class aspirations. But these are not typical. The very interest which they excite is due to their exceptional character. During the last few years, if not for a longer period, the majority of utterances by Church leaders have been marked by at least a decidedly sympathetic tone. Many of them, including, for instance, the two Archbishops, have at times drawn attention really strongly to the social problem as a whole, and have called earnestly for a definite forward move. Indeed they have formulated demands which, thirty or forty years ago, would have placed them among the boldest pioneers of social progress. But still, in the case of the majority of our dignitaries, there is something lacking in their pronouncements. They are apt to be a great deal too diplomatic and courtier-like. Tact and conciliatoriness are indeed necessary; but they easily pass into an unworthy fear of men and 'respect

of persons.' Most of our Church leaders cultivate suavity of language with such success that the whole sting of the prophetic challenge is lost in a cloud of words; they carry balance of statement to so fine a point of art that, in the end, the balance hardly inclines visibly to either side; they are so admirable at seeing both sides of a question that they readily lay themselves open to the suspicion, on the part of the man in the street, of designedly sitting on the fence. They usually fasten instinctively on the topics which can be handled without arousing much antagonism. When they do touch on the really burning issues, they too often succeed in 'drawing attention to an important question' without throwing any real light on it. Very often indeed what they actually say carries us a very long way, if its true inwardness is fully grasped in its total bearings. The person who is already awakened and well-informed on the matter at issue, reading such a pronouncement in a calm hour and fully weighing its precise significance, can see that it gives him everything that he can fairly ask. But the point is that it is so expressed that it will inevitably glance off the person whose conscience needs awakening, and leave him unaware that any aggressive challenge has been uttered or any new demand made on his Christian loyalty.

Yet occasional pronouncements of real boldness have been made from time to time, in many quarters. Thus the Dean of Durham, who has never associated himself with the activities of the C.S.U. or any similar groups, played a leading and highly honourable part in the agitation against the Putumayo rubber-atrocities. Nor can the cynic say that South America is conveniently far away. For Canon Henson (as he then was) attacked, with unflinching courage, the English directors of the company. It is in the highest degree unfortunate that so brave a man does not see that we have a precisely parallel case in the horrible industrial massacre (in large part easily preventible) which goes on year by year among miners, railway-men, iron-workers, and the victims of lead-poisoning and other 'diseases of occupations.' There is a marked distinction of degree, it is true, as regards flagrancy and deliberateness, between the two

cases; but in ultimate principle there is no difference whatever.

As regards the rank-and-file of the clergy, a steady process of permeation has been going on with increasing rapidity every year. One is constantly hearing, from the most widely scattered quarters, of surprisingly bold sermons, mostly by young curates, on the social wrongs of the day. In fact, the bulk of the younger men among the town clergy are substantially on the side of the living social aspirations of the day. But many of the older generation are still very backward; and the same is true of the majority of the country clergy. It is, however, in the case of a considerable proportion of the faithful laity that the greatest difficulty will be met. If the present development continues, it may not always be possible, in the near future, to avoid a sharp struggle in a parish between priest and people. A sprinkling, it is true, of zealous Church-workers hold views of an advanced C.S.U. type. But the majority, almost certainly, of practising Churchpeople hate anything that seems to them to savour, even in the most distant way, of what they call 'Socialism.' The hope would seem to lie with the rising generation. If the new type of teaching becomes the established thing in the average parish, it must produce its effect by degrees, as batch after batch of lads and girls grow up under the influence of social preaching and in the atmosphere of a genuinely social Church life, and receive a really live preparation for Confirmation.

It remains to consider the more definitely official action of the Church in its corporate capacity. The record of the successive Church Congresses gives us some gauge as to progress in this respect. Many years ago Mr. Champion was asked to state the case for Labour before the Church Congress; and since then social questions have been included with increasing frequency in the agenda of the Congress, and have now, for some years past, become a fixed annual feature of the deliberations. In some years, the amount and intensity of socialistic feeling which has been revealed has been astounding. The same is still more true of the Pan-Anglican Congress of 1908. The largest section of this huge convention, having the Albert

Hall assigned to it as its meeting-place, was devoted to social questions. The enthusiasm was enormous, and prominent leaders, one after another, made the most outspoken pronouncements. Among the most advanced of all the speakers were some of the Bishops, notably one member at least of the American Episcopate.

Another signal landmark was the appointment some years ago of a Joint Committee of the two Houses of Convocation and of the House of Laymen of the Province of Canterbury, for the purpose of dealing with the Moral Witness of the Church on Economic Subjects. It presented two striking reports in 1907 and 1909 respectively. The former was especially remarkable.¹ It lays down that 'the Christian ethic is essentially social.' 'We are further persuaded that the idea of individual salvation has been disastrously isolated in Christian teaching and in current Christian belief from the social idea of original Christianity and the teaching of brotherhood.' The Committee go on to declare that 'the fundamental Christian principle of the remuneration of labour is that the first charge upon any industry must be the proper maintenance of the labourer.' They then proceed to deal in a most outspoken manner with the more fundamental issues now being raised: 'It is time, we think, that the Christian Church should make clear to itself the nature of the demand for the reconstruction of society which is at present urged upon us. Behind the more technical (industrial and political) proposals lies a fundamental appeal for justice, which the Christian Church cannot ignore. It is bound to make a much more thorough endeavour than it has yet made to appreciate this appeal in all its bearings; and to consider whether the charge made against the present constitution and principles of the industrial world, and the present division of the profits of industry, is a just charge. Certainly the Christian society is competent to deal with the fundamental moral question, and is bound to press upon its members the duty of facing it.' 'It is time, we think, that the Christian conscience of the country voted urgency among parliamentary and municipal questions for all the group of

¹ Obtainable from the S.P.C.K. (68, Haymarket, S.W.1), price 2d.

problems which concern the grossly unequal distribution of wealth and well-being.' 'With whatever class the Church is dealing, we are convinced that it has a teaching which it ought to give on all matters, which concern the acquisition and distribution of wealth, in its bearing on human lives; and that this teaching involves not only private effort, but municipal and political reforms. Thus we want the Church as a body to come forward to the support of such legislation as embodies or tends to render more practicable the Christian view of the worth and meaning of human life, and the belief in the divine principle of justice.' 'The Christian conscience ought surely to approve in principle of a large public expenditure on objects which are calculated to strengthen and enrich the common life.' Finally, the Committee repudiated in terms the solution of the social problem which, till recent years, the majority of pulpits expressly proclaimed as the only genuinely Christian one: 'We think that such considerations as we have urged above will tend, not indeed to make Christians disparage or neglect the duty and privilege of almsgiving, but to make them feel that something more is wanted than improvements in our methods of administering charitable relief. We have to go deeper to the grounds of the existing misery and want and unemployment; and, while we do our best to deal with the present distress, direct our chief attention towards furthering the reorganization of society on such principles of justice as will tend to reduce poverty and misery in the future to more manageable proportions.'

It must be remembered that this report was issued by a committee which included six Bishops, and appeared with some kind of general sanction from the whole College of Bishops of the Southern Province. Unfortunately, the Bishops as a whole are much more ready to lay down principles in the vague, than to apply them to specific cases. Thus when, at the time of the Coal Strike, they were called on to act on the principle here laid down that a living wage must be a first charge on industry, they refused to make any corporate pronouncement on the ground that technical questions of detail were involved. But that would always be the case, and so no effective pressure

could ever be brought to bear on the employers, however much they might have assented with their lips to the most exacting general principles. There were ample facts, readily accessible, showing indisputably that a large proportion of the miners were not receiving the 'proper maintenance' mentioned in the report. This might have been publicly affirmed and the righting of the wrong demanded, without necessarily endorsing all the men's demands or dictating any particular terms of settlement.

Let us pass to the action of the Lambeth Conferences of the Bishops of the whole Anglican Communion. The earlier Conferences took no notice of social questions; but the Conference of 1897, in its Encyclical, pointed out that many think the present industrial system unjust, and urged the application of the principle of brotherhood. A committee of Bishops presented a report, commended in a resolution of the whole Conference, which contained the highly important statement, 'A Christian community is responsible for the character of its own economic and social order, and for deciding to what extent matters affecting that order are to be left to individual initiative, and to the unregulated play of economic forces.'

The Conference of 1908 went much further. The most important resolution, bearing on these matters, ran as follows: 'The Conference recognizes the ideals of brotherhood which underlie the democratic movement of this century; and, remembering our Master's example in proclaiming the inestimable value of every human being in the sight of God, calls upon the Church to show sympathy with the movement, in so far as it strives to procure just treatment for all and a real opportunity of living a true human life, and by its sympathy to commend to the movement the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all the hopes of human society are bound up.'¹ The accompanying Encyclical puts it a good deal more strongly. 'In so far as the democratic and industrial movement is animated by them [truths as to brotherhood, liberty, and mutual justice and help, expounded in the preceding sen-

¹ *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion 1908.* (S.P.C.K. 1s.), p. 56.

tences], and strives to procure for all, especially for the weaker, just treatment and a real opportunity of living a true human life, we appeal to all Christians to co-operate actively with it.¹ Here we have the Bishops of the entire Anglican Communion throughout the world appealing unanimously to the faithful to 'co-operate actively with' 'the democratic and industrial movement.' This may well seem an amazingly daring new departure. But we must remember that such pronouncements are procured by the efforts of a few Bishops who are specially interested in these particular issues. These men know perfectly clearly what they are saying, and really mean what they say. But large numbers of their colleagues acquiesce in such statements without quite realizing to what they are allowing themselves to be committed. Unfortunately, too, the majority of communicants probably have not the slightest idea that they have ever been exhorted by their Fathers in God to co-operate actively with Labour movements.

However, a markedly new departure has been made in connection with the National Mission. The lines that were laid down by the central authorities as the basis on which the Mission was to be conducted are far in advance of any position that has hitherto been officially adopted by the Church. The first number of the monthly *Bulletin*, the organ of the Central Council of the Mission, thus describes the character and aims of the undertaking: 'A distinction has often been drawn between this National Mission and the familiar parochial mission. If no explanation is given, this may easily be misleading. The difference lies in this, that the mission with which we are familiar has aimed at each individual separately; if he were converted or strengthened, this would affect his action as a citizen of his nation; but that was incidental. In this mission the process is reversed. The message is to the nation, and to the individual first and foremost as citizen; if he is to serve his nation as a citizen he will need conversion and consecration himself, and the appeal to individuals will be not less strong, but rather stronger, because it is through his national and social responsibility

¹ Op. cit., p. 39.

that the appeal will come. There is a real difference between a converted nation and a nation of converted individuals. All the citizens of a nation might be individually converted, and yet the public life be conducted on principles other than Christian. Good Christian people kept slaves for centuries; yet now we say that slavery is an unchristian institution. A converted nation would be one whose citizens tried to order all their relationships to one another and to other nations by Christian principles; there would very likely still be many failures; much actual wrong might still be done; but a nation ordered by justice and love, so far as it was deliberately ordered, would be something very different from what we know, and something at which no mission has hitherto directly aimed. . . . It is an attempt to discharge for the first time the permanent Mission of the Church as a whole to the nation as a whole.'

If the normal work of the Church were taking the form of a permanent National Mission conducted on these lines, we should have made a very great advance towards the ideal of the Prophetic Church. If the Church had been working on this principle for the last thirty or forty years, there can be no question that our social difficulties could never have reached such a pass as now confronts us.

The importance of this new step it would be difficult to exaggerate. For this is the deliberate utterance of the Council entrusted with the conduct of the Mission in the name of the whole Church of England. It is no casual *obiter dictum*. It is, with full consideration, put forward in the very forefront of the Council's work. It appears, too, with at least the general sanction of the Archbishops and all the Bishops. There could hardly be a more solemn or authoritative pronouncement of the Church of England in her corporate capacity. And nearly all the Bishops and dignitaries who spoke in connection with the Mission followed the lines here laid down. They have drawn attention to the things that really matter; and if in many cases they have not succeeded in stating clearly or strongly enough the real issues, yet some few of them at least have flung out the plainest and boldest challenges. To balance this, it must be acknowledged that a few others

have spoken as though the Council had never shed a ray of new light. But these happily are exceptions, badly eminent by their rarity.

Further, more than one Bishop has emphasized the necessity that the Church shall reform herself, in conformity with her own exhortations to the nation, by abolishing the excessive incomes and the palaces of the Bishops, the huge rectories or vicarages in too many parishes, and the many 'livings' on which a man cannot live without private means. Nor has there been any tendency to minimize the extent of the Church's failure, or to deny that this has been in large part due to her own mistakes and lack of sympathy and of courage. Altogether, so far as the professions made in connection with the Mission really represent the mind of the official Church as a body, the whole enterprise does amount to what Bishop Gore has so often demanded of the Church, 'a tremendous act of penitence for having failed so long and on so wide a scale to behave as the champion of the oppressed and the weak; for having tolerated what it ought not to have tolerated; for having so often been on the wrong side.' It ought not indeed to have required the staggering shock of this horrible war to open the Church's eyes; but we shall do better to be grateful for her present attitude, than to waste time and energy in barren reproaches for her past.

But this does not mean that the victory is won. We must remind ourselves once more that, on all such occasions, it is a small number of able and zealous men who rush the official Church as a whole into taking a particular stand. Many of those whom they carry with them for the moment are far from being really at one with them. Others, again, simply do not understand the issues, and passively acquiesce without really knowing what is going on. Further, if we take those Bishops and other prominent leaders whose consciences are thoroughly awakened on the social side of things, and who are thoroughly well-meaning and not lacking in courage, the majority of them know little of economic and industrial questions; they are all at sea when they come to grapple with them. If the National Mission is to be effectively followed up, they

will have for the future to keep themselves more regularly informed on these matters.

There is the danger, too, of reaction after a special effort, and of want of courage and perseverance. In particular, past experience gives us ample warrant for fearing that most of the leaders will be content with reaffirming from time to time principles so very broad and general as to be at once quite safe and quite futile, and will refuse, whenever a specific case presents itself, to make any application of those principles. The question further arises whether the Church will have the courage to tackle drastically the abuses within her own borders, the problem of clerical and episcopal incomes and residences, the scandal of pew-rents, the parson's freehold, and similar hindrances to her true work. Will she venture, too, to democratize thoroughly her own government, at the parochial, diocesan, and national levels, by giving the laity, men and women, an adequate voice in it?

There will still, therefore, be plenty of need for a special propaganda of Christian Socialism within the Church. If we could be sure that the whole official Church had thoroughly taken in, and definitely intended, fully and at all times, to act upon, the principles of the National Mission, there would no longer be any necessity for Christian Socialists as such. They could sink back contentedly into the indistinguishable mass of Churchpeople, and confine themselves to doing their individual share of Church work along the accepted lines and through the ordinary Church agencies. But, as it is, the specialists must hold together and maintain in full vigour their own distinctive organization or organizations. None the less, the National Mission represents one of the most decisive turning-points in the whole history of the Christian Church. It is a definite and exceptionally important milestone passed. Things can never be quite the same again. The activity of Christian Socialists will for the future be carried on under entirely new and far more favourable conditions. Their task will be chiefly that of encouraging their fellow-Churchmen, and especially the official Church, to maintain the high-water mark of the National Mission.

A similar movement towards an increased interest in

the social problem has manifested itself in greater or less degree within most of the other religious bodies at home and abroad. The exclusive attention given in this chapter to the Anglican Communion must not be taken as in any way intended to disparage the efforts of members of other denominations. But the purpose of the present volume is primarily to deal with Anglican problems for Anglicans. A general, but none the less grateful and appreciative, acknowledgment of social movements among Nonconformists, Roman Catholics, and Christians of other varieties throughout the world, is all that can here be made.

But we must beware of anything like the *identification* of prophetic religion with a religious enthusiasm for social justice. That is one inevitable expression or application of it—and, for our day, a peculiarly important one. But the religion itself consists in a heart-knowledge of the true God, governing men's whole life. *Such* a knowledge of God, so apprehended, must necessarily aspire to extend itself to all mankind. And this task of evangelizing the whole world is by far the widest of all special applications of the religion of the prophets, and the one which in itself gives us the deepest insight into the inner character of that religion. And the intensest interest in social problems at home should no whit diminish our zeal for foreign missions. No Church can be in a healthy condition which is not aflame with such a missionary passion as to carry her irresistibly into every opening for evangelistic work at home and abroad. The two tasks must necessarily advance side by side; here peculiarly the maxim applies, 'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' For our slums, our monstrous contrasts of riches and poverty, our embittered class-warfare, are serious obstacles to the success of our foreign missionary efforts, particularly in the case of the heirs of the ancient civilizations of the East. The difficulty is felt the more pressingly owing to the encroachments which the Western industrial system is making on these Eastern civilizations, for the most part in a peculiarly unmitigated form, corresponding to a phase which, in our own country, we have already left behind. The reproaches which our social sins bring upon the Gospel which we profess have been

expressed more than once by young Hindus and Japanese and have been published in our press. What such men say in effect is: 'Yes, we fully acknowledge the power and beauty of Christianity as we find it expressed in its sacred books. We are greatly impressed and attracted by it; we read the New Testament, and almost we are persuaded to be Christians. But the New Testament itself bids us to know a religion by its fruits. And so we look at the lands where Christianity has been for centuries the established religion. And then we are not so sure; we see that you have made an appalling mess of your social life. If that is the best that Christianity can do for a people in all that time, what can we think of it as a practically working creed? Physician, heal thyself.' That is what we are up against. Particularly does this seem to be the case in Japan. In *The East and the West* of October 1912, there appeared a powerful article by the Bishop in South Tokyo on 'Humanism versus Christianity in Japan.' In the course of this, the Bishop pointed out how intensely social is the spirit of the Japanese people. No religion which tolerates the unsocial horrors of our English national life could, he said, greatly impress them. If the Gospel was to appeal to them, its inherent 'socialism'—in the broadest sense of that word—must, he urged, be developed to the full.

These considerations make us feel peculiarly how intimately linked together are the various aspects of the prophetic message. The whole prophetic task of the Church is one and indivisible. No one side of it can be successfully pushed to its ultimate results, if other sides are neglected. The Gospel must be preached whole and preached everywhere, and practised whole and practised everywhere. The one full and rounded mission to which the goodly fellowship of the prophets is calling the Church is to labour unremittingly to hasten the time when 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'

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